THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JESUS

FREDERICK C. GRANT

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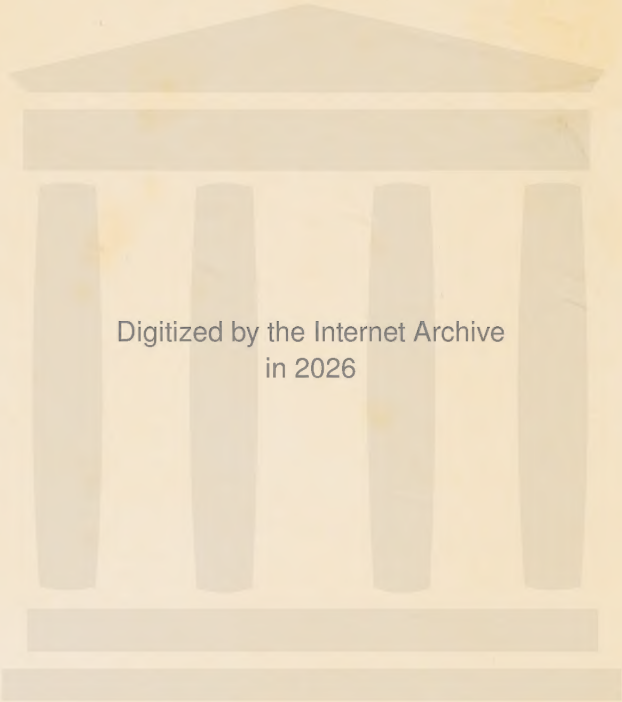
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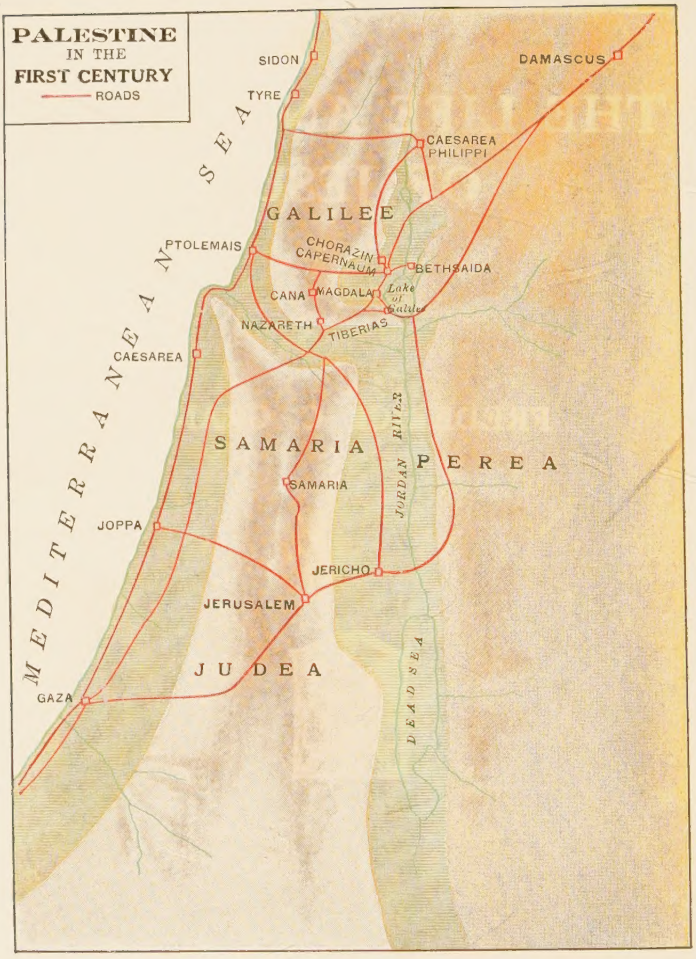
PALESTINE
IN THE
FIRST CENTURY
ROADS
SIDON
TYRE
DAMASCUS
CAESAREA
PHILIPPI
MEDITERRANEAN SEA
GALILEE
PTOLEMAIS
CHORAZIN
CAPERNAUM
BETHSAIDA
CANA
MAGDALA
Lake of Galilee
NAZARETH
TIBERIAS
CAESAREA
JORDAN RIVER
SAMARIA
PEREA
SAMARIA
JOPPA
JERICHO
JERUSALEM
JUDEA
DEAD SEA
GAZA

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THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JESUS

FREDERICK C. GRANT

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For the sake of clearness, the Biblical text used in this volume has been paraphrased in modern English. Though adhering closely to the current versions, the original has been compared throughout.

TO MY WIFE
HELEN McQUEEN GRANT

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HOW HE CAME

WHEN the golden evening gathered on the shore of Galilee,
When the fishing boats lay quiet by the sea,
Long ago the people wondered, tho' no sign was in the sky,
For the glory of the Lord was passing by.

Not in robes of purple splendor, not in silken softness shod,
But in raiment worn with travel came their God,
And the people knew His presence by the heart that ceased to sigh
When the glory of the Lord was passing by.

For He healed their sick at even, and He cured the leper's sore,
And sinful men and women sinned no more,
And the world grew mirthful-hearted, and forgot its misery
When the glory of the Lord was passing by.

Not in robes of purple splendor, but in lives that do His will,
In patient acts of kindness He comes still;
And the people cry with wonder, tho' no sign is in the sky,
That the glory of the Lord is passing by.

W. J. DAWSON.

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CHAPTER I

THE LAND WHERE JESUS LIVED

THE country in which Jesus lived, Palestine, is one of the smallest in the world. It is smaller than Belgium or the Netherlands; it is only a little larger than Vermont, less than one fourth the size of Illinois, and only one tenth the size of Colorado.

From the Syrian border on the north to the desert of Idumea on the south is only 140 miles. From the Jordan River to the Mediterranean coast is only 50 miles. The Jordan itself, from the outlet of the Lake of Galilee to the Dead Sea into which it flows, is only 65 miles long. As the crow flies, it is only 70 miles from Nazareth to Jerusalem—an aviator can cover this distance in half an hour.

PHYSICAL FEATURES

Palestine is a beautiful land, hilly and picturesque. Except along the seacoast and in the Plain of Esdraelon, one cannot travel many miles in any direction without losing sight of his starting-place, unless he climbs a high hill to look back.

Judæa and Samaria.—Down the middle of the country, north and south, lies a high and rugged plateau. Thus if you wish to travel eastward from Joppa, on the Mediterranean coast (see the map), you must first cross the maritime plain, about twelve miles wide, and then begin to ascend the foothills of the central range.

Ten miles further the real "hill-country" is reached. This is the highest land in central Palestine, and is twelve or fifteen miles across. On its eastern side lies

the city of Jerusalem. Beyond this begins the steep descent to the Jordan Valley, which is about fifteen miles across and over a thousand feet below sea-level. On the opposite side rise the cliffs and hills of eastern Palestine; and ten miles beyond these lies the desert, stretching away for hundreds of miles to the east.

Galilee.—But Galilee, where Jesus grew up and spent most of his ministry, is less rugged than Judæa and Samaria, and although smaller in size it supported a much larger population. The highland range is broken in southern Galilee by the fertile Plain of Esdraelon. This lies northwest and southeast, and joins the Mediterranean seacoast, just north of Mount Carmel, with the upper end of the Jordan Valley, just south of the Lake of Galilee. (See if you can find it on the map, though it is not named there.)

Looking north from the middle of this plain, you would see the hills of Lower Galilee—and among them the hill of Nazareth—rising gently to the mountain foothills of Upper Galilee; back of these stands the mountain range of Lebanon in Syria, with snow-capped Hermon rising majestically far away in the northeast.

To the east and north lies the Lake of Galilee, shaped like a harp, its eastern shores girded by steep cliffs, but bordered on the north and west by the lovely Plain of Gennesaret. In this plain were the cities of Capernaum, Bethsaida, Chorazin, and Magdala, where Jesus spent the greater part of his ministry.

Rivers.—Rivers and streams abound in Palestine, though many of them are filled only in the rainy season. Springs are common, fed underground by the melting snow on the northern mountains.

Through the Plain of Esdraelon flows the river Kishon,

famous in ancient history, and into the Jordan, the Dead Sea, and the Lake of Galilee flow tributaries from all sides. The source of the Jordan is found in the Lebanon Valley north of Mount Hermon. Flowing south and westward it spreads out to form a marshy little lake, "the Waters of Merom," and then flows on down into the Lake of Galilee, whose surface is over six hundred feet below sea-level. Leaving Galilee, it winds rapidly down through the Jordan Valley to the Dead Sea—which has no outlet and is so salty no fish can live in it.

INDUSTRIES

Although Palestine is small in area and broken by hills and valleys, it was once a very fertile land, and in it lived over a million people. We must not judge the country as it was in Jesus' time by what travelers see there to-day. Then it was one of the most fruitful and prosperous lands in the world; especially is this true of Galilee, Jesus' own country.

Products of the soil.—Its climate was warm and sunny, like the island of Sicily or southern Italy. Orchards of figs and olives, vineyards, palm groves, gardens of pomegranates and cucumbers, citron and melons, lettuce and mustard, fields of flax and barley and millet covered the hillsides. It is said that grapes and olives ripened the year round, save for two months in winter. And the rabbis explained that the fruits of Galilee were not taken up to Jerusalem lest people should visit the holy city in order to enjoy such delicacies, instead of to observe the sacred festivals!

Flowers grew beside every winding road through the hills—flags and lilies, hyacinths, tulips, anemones, roses and oleanders and wild gourds. In the springtime the fields looked like billowy seas of green and white and gold.

On the mountains of Carmel and Lebanon grew forests of oak, cedar, and walnut.

The fishing industry.—Fish were found in abundance in the Lake of Galilee, and in the marshy valley-bottoms and the streams. Fish-pickling was one of the great industries of the country, and fish of Tarichea were shipped to Rome and Antioch and Alexandria.

The market place.—In the markets of Galilee were sold fruits and vegetables, dates and figs, olive oil, eggs, grain (which each family ground for itself in making bread, just as most people still grind their own coffee), spices and salt and fish. There were also household utensils and furniture, lamps and tables, and children's toys; coarse-woven linen and wool cloth; and besides all these, many strange and wonderful things brought in from Egypt and Tyre and the lands beyond the sea.

A busy people.—In the south, on the rocky hillsides of Samaria and Judæa, lonely shepherds watched their flocks, guarding them against wolves and robbers; and in the country east of the Jordan great herds of cattle grazed. But in Galilee farmers tilled the rich soil and harvested their abundant crops, fishermen dragged the lake with their nets, people came and went, busy and happy and prosperous.

Scores of towns and villages were scattered over the hills and about the lake. To-day most of these have disappeared, and the land is rocky and barren, like Judæa. But in Jesus' time there must have been 300,000 people living in Galilee—ten times as many as live there now.

Travel.—Roads crossed the land in all directions. Among them was the oldest road in the world, from Babylonia to Egypt. It passed through Damascus, across Galilee to the pass south of Mount Carmel, then

down along the seacoast to the land of the Nile. From the earliest times, before history began, caravans traveled this road, laden with fruit and timber, baskets of figs and dates, gold and copper and precious stones, wheat and rye and barley, flax and wool, dyes and preserved fish. And down this road had come in ancient times the armies of Assyria and Persia and Babylon.

Another road passed from Ptolemais up through the Plain of Esdraelon into the hill country of Samaria and Judæa—and along this road, in Jesus' time, traveled the soldiers of Rome as they left ship at the port and went up to the garrisons in Samaria, Jericho, and Jerusalem. Then there were other winding roads which connected the cities and villages scattered through the country, and look like an odd net spread over the map.

CENTERS OF POPULATION

We have already mentioned the chief cities. *Jerusalem*, the ancient capital of Judæa, was a strongly walled city in the highlands. Here was the temple, visited each year by thousands of pilgrims from all over Palestine and wherever else, throughout the world, Jewish families resided.

Samaria was another ancient city in the heart of the hill country. But loyal Jews never visited it; for the Samaritans were a mixed race, and had a temple of their own which they preferred to that at Jerusalem.

Nazareth, where Jesus grew up, was on the southern edge of the Galilean hills, on the very border of the fertile Plain of Esdraelon.

Capernaum was on the road from Damascus to Egypt; and here was the customs-house, where the freighted caravans were taxed for their use of the road through Palestine.

Tiberias, on the southwest shore of the lake, was a new city, built by Herod Antipas in honor of the Roman emperor. It was finished just before Jesus began his public ministry. So far as we know, he never entered it. Though it was the capital of Galilee, no loyal Jew would visit Tiberias. It was a pagan city, and defiled—for a cemetery had been disturbed when its walls were built, and in Jewish eyes this made the city polluted.

Then there were other cities besides Tiberias and Samaria which faithful Jews rarely entered, for to do so meant defiling contact with idolatry. Such were certain cities along the Mediterranean coast, and the cities of *Decapolis*, east of Galilee and the Jordan. Even in Galilee and Judæa there were scattered colonies of "Gentiles" or foreigners, Greeks, Syrians, Arabs, Egyptians, and people from all countries, drawn to Palestine by the prospect of trade or by the fame of its fertile soil.

Wide-spread fame.—Traders passed ceaselessly through the land, for Palestine was the great "land-bridge" between Asia and Europe and Africa. Her baths and springs were famous all over the world, and many travelers visited Palestine to enjoy her wonderful climate and delicious fruits. For thousands of years great empires had gone to war in order to possess this rich and beautiful country. Now it was in peace, under the stable government of Rome.

Thus it was in no remote and unfrequented province that our Lord was born and grew to manhood. On the contrary, he lived in one of the most famous, most prosperous, and most populous regions in the world. Galilee was a vast, luxuriant garden, rich in the products of nature and filled with crowded cities. Here he spent his boyhood; and here, among its multitudes, he went about doing good, healing the sick, teaching men

to love and obey their Father in heaven, and proclaiming the good tidings of the Kingdom of God.

STUDY TOPICS

1. Find Palestine in your geography (map of Asia). Suppose you are planning a journey to the Holy Land: which route do you prefer?
2. Turn to the map of Palestine in this book. Trace the road from Damascus to Egypt. Show how you would go from Nazareth to Jerusalem; from Nazareth to Capernaum; from Bethsaida to Jericho.
3. Palestine is 140 miles long by 80 miles wide. How does it compare with your own state in size?
4. How far is Albany from New York? Indianapolis from Chicago? Los Angeles from San Francisco? Nashville from Atlanta? Compare the distance from Nazareth to Jerusalem.
5. Can you explain the change which has taken place in Palestine? Why do so few people live there now compared to the number in the first century?
6. Do you know how to pronounce Ptolemais, Esdraelon, Gennesaret, Capernaum, Bethsaida, Magdala, Chorazin? What and where was each?
7. Describe the industries of Palestine in the time of Jesus.
8. Draw a map of Palestine, locating its principal divisions, cities, and rivers.

CHAPTER II

THE BIRTH OF JESUS

In the days of Jesus the Jews were no longer a free and independent people. Like almost every country in the world, Palestine was under the government of Rome. The Romans had divided the empire which they conquered into provinces, and Palestine was only the southern end of the province of Syria. In the year 63 B. C., when Jesus' grandfather was a boy, the Roman general Pompey had come up into the hills with an army and captured Jerusalem. No doubt Jesus was often told the story of this conquest.

THE ROMAN RULE

For a hundred years Palestine had enjoyed independence under the noble Jewish dynasty known as the Maccabees. But at the end of the century civil war had broken out through the quarrel of two brothers, Hyrcanus and Aristobulus, each claiming to be the lawful high priest and king.

The capture of Jerusalem.—This controversy gave the Romans their opportunity. Pompey led his troops down to Jericho, rested there over night, and next day marched up to Jerusalem. The people opened the gates and welcomed him, but Aristobulus and his followers fortified the temple and prepared for a siege.

For three months the siege continued, until one autumn day in the year 63, the troops broke into the temple, killed the priests at the altar, and seized Aristobulus. He was taken to Rome as a captive, and marched

in Pompey's triumph. Hyrcanus was left as high priest, but without any royal power; and thenceforth Judæa, like the rest of Palestine, was under the government of Rome.

King Herod.—A few years later, however, the Romans gave the Jews a king, who was to reign under the oversight of the Governor of Syria—somewhat as the rajahs of India rule under the British viceroy. This king was Herod. He was not a member of the dethroned Maccabean house, but only a half-Jewish Idumean, a clever, progressive, but unscrupulous man.

For a while the Jews rejoiced to have once more a king of their own. Herod began to rebuild the temple and to beautify Jerusalem, his capital. Great public buildings were erected in Judæa, Samaria and Galilee, and at Cæsarea, on the sea. Even across the Jordan the old forts and military outposts were transformed into cities, with castles and palaces, theaters and markets.

But Herod was a tyrant—proud, jealous, and merciless. He suspected everyone about him of disloyalty and intrigue, and put to death not only the descendants of the Maccabees, lest they should head a revolution, but even three of his own sons, and the mother of two of them, Mariamne. His own miserable life was ended in the year 4 B. C., after he had reigned thirty-seven years.

The sons of Herod.—Augustus was now the Roman emperor, and so with him lay the choice of Herod's successor. He parceled out the country among three of the surviving sons of Herod—Archelaus, to whom he gave Judæa and Samaria; Antipas, who received Galilee and Perea; and Philip, to whom went the region north of Perea and east of Galilee.

The census.—In the year in which Herod died a census had been ordered by the Emperor Augustus. For he kept a book, which he called his "Breviary of the Whole Empire," in which were entered the population and military forces of all the nations under the Roman rule. To make the figures accurate, a census had to be taken from time to time.

In Palestine the census was not taken from house to house, as elsewhere, and as we take it to-day. It was taken by families. And even if members of a family lived in some remote region they would return home for the census, so as to be enrolled in their native city or village.

The journey to Bethlehem.—So it came to pass that Joseph and Mary went up from Nazareth in Galilee to their native village in Judæa for the census. Bethlehem was their birthplace, a little town five miles south of Jerusalem on the road to Gaza. Here still lived descendants of the family of King David, who had reigned over Palestine a thousand years before; and even in the days when Jews had lost their freedom this family was proud to be of his "house and lineage."

The birth of Jesus.—And here, in this little village, Jesus was born at the time of the census. The beautiful story of his birth; the message to the shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flocks by night; the song of the angels, "Peace on earth, good will to men;" the manger used for his cradle—all this beautiful tale you have heard every Christmas you can remember.

It is found in the second chapter of the Gospel according to Saint Luke. And since it has never been told so well by anyone else, you must read it in the words of the Gospel:

ROAD FROM JERUSALEM TO BETHLEHEM

"Now it came to pass in those days, that a decree was issued by Cæsar Augustus for a census of the whole world. This was the first census taken when Quirinius was governor of Syria. And all went to be enrolled, every one to his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, into Judæa, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David. So he went to be enrolled with Mary, who was betrothed to him.

"And it came to pass, while they were there, that she brought forth her firstborn son; and she wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them at the inn.

"Now there were shepherds in the same country abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And the angel of the Lord stood by them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them; and they were sore afraid. And the angel said to them, 'Be not afraid: for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all the people; for there is born to you this day in the city of David a savior, which is Christ the Lord. And this is the sign unto you: you shall find a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, and lying in a manger.' And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,

" 'Glory in the highest to God,
And on earth peace
Among men whom He favors.'

"And it came to pass, when the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, 'Let us now go to Bethlehem, and see this thing that is come to pass which the Lord has made known unto us.' And they came with haste, and found both Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in the manger. And when they saw it, they repeated

what had been told them by the angel about this child.

"And all that heard it wondered at the things which were spoken unto them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these sayings, pondering them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, even as it was spoken unto them."

—Luke 2: 1-20.

THE CHILD

When Jesus was eight days old he was given his name. This had already been decided upon: he was to be called "Jesus." It was a noble name, meaning "Jehovah saves," and had been borne by great men in the past—by Joshua, who led the people into Palestine after the death of Moses; and by a great high priest in the days of Zechariah and Zerubbabel, after the return of the Jews from exile.

The Presentation.—A month later Jesus was taken up to the temple in Jerusalem. Every Jewish boy was thus taken and presented to the Lord, just as Christian children are presented to Him in baptism. A sacrifice was offered on the altar, and then he was taken home. From now on he belonged to God, he was "holy to the Lord," he was a child of God and a member of the sacred race.

A wonderful incident occurred that day in the temple when Jesus was presented. An old man by the name of Simeon, who lived in Jerusalem and spent much of his time in the temple worshiping God and praying that He would send the Messiah to free His people, came in when the sacrifice was offered.

It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he should not die until he had seen the Messiah; and

when he now saw Jesus he believed that his prayers were answered. This little child, this son of David, was the Lord's Messiah! And so he took the child in his arms and gave thanks to God:

"Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart
In peace, according to Thy word!
For mine eyes have seen Thy salvation,
Which Thou hast prepared before the face of all peoples,
To be a light to lighten the Gentiles
And the glory of Thy people Israel!"
—Luke 2: 29-32.

Then he blessed Mary and Joseph and the little child. And there came in an aged woman, Anna, who was a prophetess. Like Simeon, she spent much of her time in the temple, fasting and praying night and day for "the redemption of Jerusalem" from its yoke of bondage. She had seen Simeon take the child in his arms and say his words of blessing and thanksgiving. And she too recognized the Messiah in this tiny babe, and spoke of him to the others who were gathered there to pray for Messiah's coming.

What a wonderful impression this must have made upon Mary, the mother of Jesus! The Gospel says that she kept all these sayings in her heart, and pondered them.

The "Magnificat."—Do you know the beautiful hymn which she sang when first she knew that Jesus was to be born? It is found in the first chapter of Saint Luke, and every boy and girl should learn it. No doubt she taught it to Jesus when he was old enough to learn; and perhaps she sang it softly as they went down that day from the temple, and she knew

that her own dear baby was the one whom God had sent to save His people.

"My soul doth magnify the Lord,
And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior.
For He hath looked upon the low estate of His handmaiden:
And behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.
For He that is mighty hath done for me great things,
And holy is His name.

"And His mercy is upon them that fear Him
Throughout all generations.
He hath showed strength with His arm;
He hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their heart.
He hath put down princes from their thrones,
And exalted them of low degree.

"The hungry He hath filled with good things,
And the rich He hath sent empty away.
He hath helped Israel His servant,
That He might remember mercy—
As He promised to our forefathers—
Toward Abraham and his seed for ever."
—Luke 1:46-55.

And so when they had accomplished all things that were required by the sacred Law, they returned to Galilee, to their home in Nazareth. "And the child grew and waxed strong, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him."

STUDY TOPICS

1. Who were the Maccabees? (See encyclopedia.)
2. Consult a Roman history and learn what countries were under the rule of Rome at the time of Jesus' birth.

3. Refer to the map of Palestine and locate the territory given by Augustus to each of Herod's sons to rule. Also locate Cæsarea.
4. Where was the village of Bethlehem? Tell what you know of it.
5. Trace on the map two routes from Nazareth to Jerusalem. Which do you think would be the easier journey with a little baby?
6. Tell in your own words the story of the birth; tell it as nearly as you can just as Luke has told it.
7. Relate the incident which occurred in the temple when Jesus was presented.
8. Tell the story of the Magnificat. Commit it to memory.

CHAPTER III

JESUS' HOME IN NAZARETH

On the morning of the third day of their returning journey from Judæa, as they descended the southern hills, or came up into the plain from the Jordan Valley, Joseph and Mary caught sight of the familiar hill of Nazareth. Near its summit they could just make out the white cluster which was their own village. Between them and it lay the broad Plain of Esdraelon. But by nightfall they would be safely home with their precious burden, which Mary held in her arms as she rode upon the plodding, gentle ass which Joseph led. From time to time as they journeyed on they could make out more clearly the streets and houses—first twenty miles away, then fifteen, then ten, then five—until at last they were leaving the valley and climbing the road which led to their very door.

THE SURROUNDINGS

In those days Nazareth must have looked somewhat as it does to-day. It was a scattered group of houses on the hillside, with crooked streets, and perhaps a few olive or fig trees or grape-vines in the tiny yards.

Home life in Nazareth.—The houses were square, and built of stone and gray, sun-dried brick. None of them was very large; they had only two or three rooms, and the stairway, if there was one, ran up outside to the roof (made of clay and dried in the sun), where the family slept on hot summer nights. The village water supply was a cool spring, which is now called "the Virgin's Fountain." Every day the women and girls

NAZARETH

of the village brought their jars to fill them at the spring. And here Jesus, when he was a little older and able to walk, followed his mother as she went for water.

There was a synagogue in the village. For wherever ten Jewish families lived a synagogue was established. Beside the synagogue stood the schoolhouse, where the boys learned to read and write. And then there were a few shops—just as every little village to-day has a general store and a blacksmith shop and perhaps a meat-market. Among them was the carpenter shop kept by Joseph.

The carpenter shop.—We can imagine what this shop was like. It was, perhaps, only one room in the house where the family lived. With his few simple tools—saws, chisels, a hammer and an axe, with knives for shaving and planing—Joseph fashioned the implements used by the farmers of the neighborhood. These were crude wooden plows and rakes: forks and fans for shaking out the grain after it had been trodden on the threshing-floor; yokes for the oxen; carts and cart-wheels; wooden shovels; handles for sickles and knives; chairs and tables for household use; doors and door-frames and wooden locks and keys.

Here, while he was still a little boy, Jesus would listen to the men talk as they came in to buy implements or furniture, or to order them made—especially on the rainy days of winter, when no work could be done in the fields. Here they would discuss the weather, or the Romans, or the tax-collectors, or the news just brought to the larger cities by travelers and caravan-drivers. And when they came to pay for Joseph's wares or his work, it would probably be in produce as often as in money—grain or poultry or dried fruits.

WHERE JESUS WENT TO CHURCH

On Sabbaths everyone in Nazareth went to the synagogue. This was their finest building, and the whole village was proud of it. As they entered, the women went to one side and sat down and the men went to the other; the girls sat with their mothers, and boys with their fathers. Up in front was the chancel or pulpit, where Lessons from the Law and Prophets were read, and where the rabbi—if there was one—sat to expound the Law.

The Bible on a scroll.—In a little closet or "ark," with curtains hanging before it, were kept the precious scrolls on which the Bible was written. You may sometime have seen such a scroll as these were—a long strip of parchment with the ends fastened to rods of wood, which were then rolled together. To find the place, one had to wind the scroll on one rod and unroll it from the other.

The man who had charge of the services and the care of the building was called "the Ruler of the Synagogue." On the Sabbath it was his duty to invite certain men in the congregation to come forward and read the appointed Scripture Lessons.

The service.—The Bible was, of course, written in the Hebrew language; but in our Lord's time the Jews no longer spoke Hebrew. Instead, they spoke a dialect called Aramaic, which was like Hebrew, but differently pronounced. And so it was necessary after each Lesson to interpret it, and give its explanation in the language commonly understood. The man who did this had the title of *Methurgeman*, or "Interpreter."

After Jesus grew up he was often asked to read and interpret the Lessons in the synagogue. As a boy he

went every Sabbath and sat beside Joseph and joined in the prayers and listened to the reading and expounding of the Bible—for that was all the sermon they had.

Morning and evening every Jew recited a section from the Law, which was called the *Shema* (or "Hear"), from the first word of the passage in Hebrew.

> **"Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One.**
>
> **"And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.**
>
> **"And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be upon thy heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently to thy children; and thou shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest in the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thy hand, and they shall be for frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the door posts of thy house, and upon thy gates."—Deuteronomy 6: 4-9.**

Not only was this passage said morning and evening ("when thou liest down and when thou risest up"), but the latter part was literally obeyed. Men and boys wore little leather boxes bound to their foreheads, containing four Scripture passages (Exod. 13: 1–10, 11–16; Deut. 6: 4–9; 11: 13–21) written in fine handwriting on very thin parchment or skin. These were called phylacteries. And beside the doorway of every house was a *mezuzah*, like a tiny mail-box, containing the words of the Shema. (Deuteronomy 6: 4–9; 11: 13–21). Thus the requirement was strictly observed.

On the Sabbath, in addition to the Lessons, the Shema and the reading of Psalms, the stated prayers were said.

Many of them were very beautiful. Here is a part of one which was used at the morning service on that day:

> **"Blessed art Thou, O Lord, our God, King of the universe, who formest light and createst darkness, who makest peace and createst all things: Who in Thy mercy givest light to the earth and to them that dwell thereon, and in Thy goodness renewest the creation every day continually. How manifold are thy works, O Lord: In wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy possessions . . . ."**
>
> **—From the Jewish Prayer Book.**

GOING TO SCHOOL

Beside the synagogue was the school. Here the boys of the village learned to read and write.

What the pupils studied.—But at first they had no books. Instead, they sat about their teacher in a circle on the floor, and he read to them from the Bible. This they memorized, as he read, and recited it after him. As they learned to write, they copied down what he read to them. At the age of five a boy began in this way to learn the Scripture. At ten he began to study the explanation of the Law made by the scribes or rabbis. Very early he learned the Shema and the Ten Commandments and some of the Psalms and prayers used in the synagogue.

Through the Old Testament (the Jewish Bible), Jesus heard the voice of his Father speaking to him. Its stories were stories of men and women who had loved and served God. And he, too, loved God, and wanted to do great deeds for him. The Psalms, the Law, the Prophets were the most wonderful books in the world to him.

A Son of the Commandments.—Then, one day when he was twelve or thirteen years old, Jesus was made a *bar mitswoth*—a "Son of the Commandments"—and after that he was supposed to keep the entire Law, just like his father and the grown-up men of the congregation. Thereafter, too, since he was a bright, intelligent boy, he was permitted to read the Law to the congregation in the synagogue. This was a happy day for his parents. We can imagine how Joseph and Mary observed the event when Jesus first read the Law in the synagogue, wearing their best clothes, and providing a Sabbath dinner for their friends and neighbors in honor of the occasion. It was like a graduation day in our schools.

Other books.—There were other books which people read besides the Bible, but they were very few, and were not recommended by the rabbis (a rabbi was both a minister and a school teacher in one). The rabbis believed that everything a person needed to know was contained in the Law and Prophets.

And so boys and girls had no story-books like ours—and girls were not taught to read anyway. But even so, they loved all the more dearly the stories which were read to them from the Old Testament—from Genesis and Exodus and Joshua and Kings and Chronicles and Nehemiah. And so, also, a boy who really loved the Bible came to know it perfectly, and to understand its message about God and righteousness, the punishment for sin, and the forgiveness of the divine and all-loving Father. Jesus knew the Old Testament perfectly. Even on the cross he was reciting psalms which he had learned in boyhood—at home by his mother's knee, or in the school beside the synagogue at Nazareth.

RECREATIONS

After he became old enough to play with the other boys, he learned their games—tag, and follow-the-leader, and such games as boys have always enjoyed. Then they had some games quite different from ours—they would play synagogue (as children to-day "play church") and have a service like that on the Sabbath; or they would have wedding and funeral processions, either dancing to the pipe, and carrying sticks for torches, or wailing and beating their breasts, whichever was proper.

Rambles in the hills.—On bright, sunny days in summer he would tramp over the hills, perhaps with other boys, but probably alone. Flowers were everywhere, and birds sang in the trees and meadows beside the road. Jesus knew and loved God's great out-of-doors; his sermons and parables, when he grew up and began to teach, were full of pictures of nature.

THE WORLD OUTSIDE

It was a fine view one got from the top of the hill, just west of the village and a little higher up. From the summit you could see in all directions. Off to the west lay Mount Carmel, covered with green forests which seemed always changing their hues as the mists came up from the sea. Beyond lay the blue Mediterranean, with here and there the white sail of a coasting vessel or the shining side of a Roman trireme glistening in the sun. To the north were the great mountains, beyond which lay the famous cities of the Gentiles, Tyre and Sidon and Antioch and Damascus. Nearer by, just over the hills, were the villages of Cana and Sepphoris (once the capital of Galilee, before Tiberias was built), and Jotapata. Eastward, beyond the high ridges, lay the Lake and its surrounding cities, a thriving

center of life and industry. Compared to the cities on the lake, Nazareth was a very quiet, even dull, sort of a place. But they were a whole day's journey away; and boys never visited that far from home unless accompanied by their fathers or relatives.

The caravans.—Across the hills stretched those roads we have already told about. There was that old, old road with its dusty caravans making their way from Egypt to Damascus and the Valley of Euphrates, or back again. This road passed just a mile or two below Nazareth, in the valley. From the hilltop you could almost count the camels, and you could see their drivers trudging along beside them. East and west through the great plain ran the road to Ptolemais, with its soldiers and merchants and travelers.

Thus Nazareth was not a city like Capernaum or Bethsaida; it was a country village, somewhat secluded in the midst of its beautiful hills; yet it was near enough the busy, thriving centers, near enough the great highways of travel, for Jesus to know what was going on in the world.

The famous city.—Off to the south stretched the wide and beautiful Plain of Esdraelon; and beyond this were the hills, dim in the distance, and mounting up, fold behind fold, to the mountains of Samaria and Judæa. Up in these mountains, far to the south, lay the most wonderful city in the world, where was God's Temple, and where lived the sacred priests and scribes and doctors of the Law. A great wall surrounded it, and there were soldiers guarding the gates. And every day in the temple sacrifices were offered to God.

Ever since he was a little boy, Jesus had been told of this marvelous city by those who visited it each year to observe the feasts. He had asked many questions about

it, and he imagined very well what it was like. Best of all, in another year or two he would be old enough to go along when his parents went up for the Passover. No doubt this was often in his mind as he came home from his rambles on the hills—some day he too would visit Jerusalem, the Holy City, and see it for himself, and walk about its streets, and go to the temple, and worship in the City of the Great King.

STUDY TOPICS

1. Trace the probable route taken by Joseph and Mary as they crossed the Esdraelon Valley to Nazareth.
2. Can you shut your eyes and see the city of Nazareth as it looked when Jesus lived there?
3. Compare the service in the Jewish synagogue of Jesus' day with our modern church service.
4. Compare the subjects studied in the old Jewish schools with the course of study in your own school. If our education is better than theirs, should more, correspondingly, be expected of us?
5. What language did Jesus speak? What language did he read?
6. Try to describe a day's life such as Jesus must have lived when he was your age. Have in mind that he learned Joseph's trade and helped in the shop.
7. Did you ever see any Hebrew writing? Find some (see dictionary or encyclopædia), and see what it looks like. Are any of the letters like English?
8. What is your favorite book in the Old Testament?—your favorite story? Do you think that Jesus enjoyed it when he was a boy? What was the Law? The Prophets?

CHAPTER IV

A VISIT TO JERUSALEM

At last the day came when Jesus was old enough to go on the pilgrimage to Jerusalem. For weeks preparations had been made for the journey. Food had been prepared, the tent and clothing packed, and arrangements made for leaving the younger children of the household with one of the neighbors while Joseph and Mary and Jesus were away.

THE FEAST

There were three great festivals in the Jewish year, when every faithful Israelite was expected to go to Jerusalem. These were the Passover, held in March or April; the Feast of Weeks, which came fifty days later; and the Feast of Tabernacles, in September or October. But most Jews who lived at a distance from Jerusalem were able to attend but one of the three each year. And so, Saint Luke says, "His parents went every year to Jerusalem at the Feast of the Passover": for Galilee was too far from Jerusalem for them to attend all three of the feasts.

The Passover.—Jesus was, of course, fully instructed about the observance of the festival long before he was allowed to go. Not only had he heard all about it from older boys who had been to Jerusalem, but he had studied the Law, which told how it was to be observed (see Exodus 12; Deuteronomy 16).

Why it was observed, and how.—The Passover commemorated the escape of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt, in the time of Moses. Therefore, the Pass-

over meal was just like the last meal their forefathers had eaten in Egypt: they wore their hats and coats, as if ready to depart; they ate in haste; and the food, which was lamb and bitter herbs and bread made without yeast, was entirely consumed, with nothing left over. Just as our Thanksgiving dinner is as much like the Pilgrims' observance of Harvest Home as our mothers can make it, so their feast was to remind them of the Deliverance from Pharaoh.

The hymns of thanksgiving.—But this was not all. The reason for holding the feast was to thank God for freedom and deliverance. And so they sang hymns of thanksgiving, called "the Hallel." These hymns are in our Bible, Psalms 113 to 118. They begin as follows:

"Praise ye Jehovah.
Praise, O ye servants of the Lord,
Praise ye the name of Jehovah.
Blessed be the name of Jehovah
From this time forth and for evermore;
From the rising of the sun unto its going down
Jehovah's name is to be praised."
—Psalm 113: 1-2.

And the reason for going to Jerusalem to celebrate the feast was simply this: men wanted to thank God as a nation for what He had given them as a nation. Jerusalem was the capital; and the temple was the great center of Jewish religion. It was the natural place to observe the festival; and in the olden times, when the Law was made, all Jews lived either in or near Jerusalem, so that it was no hardship to attend.

THE JOURNEY

And so they started, this sunny spring day in the year when Jesus was twelve years old. It was the

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loveliest time of the year. Flowers were in bloom, birds sang sweetly in the trees and bushes by the roadside, the fields were a velvety green, and sunshine flooded the earth with warmth and splendor. The breeze from the sea was no longer chill and damp: nor had the burning heat of summer arrived with its hot winds from the far away deserts of the east and south.

The company.—There were many in the company going from Nazareth. One or two at least, perhaps more, came from every household in town. Soon the group from Nazareth was joined by others from nearby villages. For several days every road to the south would be crowded with Passover pilgrims.

In the evenings they put up their tents and camped beside the road. The boys, if not too tired, played games. After a while they sat down by the fire and listened while their fathers told of other journeys; of the wonderful city which lay at the end of the road; of the great temple which King Herod had begun to rebuild before he died, and which was still unfinished.

At early dawn the camp was astir. After a hasty breakfast the day's travel began. And as they journeyed the pilgrims sang those old chants which we find in the Book of Psalms (120 to 134), called the "Songs of Ascents."

"Jerusalem, thou art builded
As a city that is compact together:
Whither the tribes go up, even the tribes of Jehovah,
For an ordinance for Israel,
To give thanks to the name of Jehovah."

—Psalm 122: 3-4.

AT JERUSALEM

As the afternoon advanced, and they were nearing the Mount of Olives, Joseph told Jesus to watch now for his first sight of the Holy City. As they rounded the hill, there before him it lay, vast and majestic in the April sunlight.

The view of the city.—Nearest by, he could see its northern wall, high and massive—with the great stone towers which Herod had built above the gates. But higher still, above the walls, on the hill of Zion stood the temple. It was built of marble and cedar; and on its front, facing eastward, and on its sides, were huge plates of shining gold. Its towers or "pinnacles" were 180 feet high. Smoke was ascending from the altar, where fire burned perpetually. Soon it would be time for the evening sacrifice, when clouds of smoke and incense should arise. Already he could see the courts of the temple filled with crowds of worshipers.

Far off to the south and west, beyond the temple, and across the roofs of the houses, could be seen the palace of Herod, now the home of the Roman governor. (For in the year 6 A. D. the Emperor had deposed Archelaus, and appointed a governor in his stead.) Away to the south, visible now as they ascended the crest of the Mount of Olives, was the steep wall, rising sheer one hundred and fifty feet above the Kidron Valley. Far beyond, in the background, lay the haze-wrapped mountains of Judæa.

Camping for the night.—They did not enter the city that night, but camped on the hillside. Jerusalem was already overcrowded. Every house had its guests, and there was no more room within the walls. Israelites from all over the world had come to the feast. Poor

GREAT WALL OF JERUSALEM

country people from Galilee had no relatives who might entertain them in the great city.

IN THE TEMPLE

Early next morning they awoke; for, shortly before dawn, the priests in the temple blew their trumpets to rouse the sleeping city for worship.

The morning sacrifice.—First the priests appointed to offer the morning sacrifice made ready the altar—they removed the ashes, raked the embers, and placed fresh wood upon it. Then those appointed to open the temple gates did so. It required twenty men to open them, they were so heavy. Then the gates of the city were opened by the soldiers who kept guard and lived in the towers above them.

As soon as the gates were open Jesus and Mary and Joseph entered and went up to the temple. His mother entered the Court of the Women, while Joseph and Jesus went farther in, to the Court of the Men of Israel.

Then, just as the sun rose over the eastern hills, the white-robed choir of Levites began the morning hymn, accompanied by cymbals and trumpets. The sacrifice was offered upon the high altar just outside the sanctuary, and the priests pronounced the blessing "in the divine Name."

God's house.—The service was over. But the three no doubt lingered in the sacred courts, offering prayers and thanks to God in His very presence. For the temple was God's House, and here, of all places on earth, people could come nearest to Him. Jesus repeated the prayers he had long ago learned to say; but also, out of his adoring heart, he poured forth love and worship and thanksgiving to his Father in heaven. Mary and Joseph—can you imagine what were *their*

prayers? Do you not suppose that they prayed very earnestly for the Boy whom they loved so dearly, who had now come for the first time in his life, since he was a tiny babe, into his Father's House?

How wonderful an impression this visit made upon Jesus! It was the greatest event in all his boyhood. The city, the crowds, the temple, the priests, the sacrifice, the wonder and splendor and awe of the holy place—all this must have overshadowed the Passover meal, which was after all only one incident of that memorable journey. Never could he forget this festival and the multitude of things he had seen and heard.

THE RETURN

Nor was his mother ever to forget it! For this was the time when Jesus was lost for three whole days.

Jesus tarries in the temple.—As soon as the feast was over—three or four days after the Passover supper had been eaten—Jesus' parents and the rest of the company from Nazareth set out for home. Thinking that Jesus was with the other boys, they went a whole day's journey, till they camped at night beyond Jericho. Then, to their amazement and alarm, Jesus was nowhere to be found. What could have separated him from the company? There were other companies of pilgrims with whom he might be traveling. Could he be with them?—No, they had not seen him. There was nothing to do but to go back and search for him. "And it came to pass," Luke says,

> **"It came to pass, after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, listening to them, and asking them questions. And all that heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers.**

"His parents were astonished when they saw him, and his mother said, 'Child, why have you dealt this way with us? Your father and I have sought you sorrowing.' But he replied, 'Why were you looking for me? Did you not know I must be in my Father's House?' "—Luke 2: 46-49.

There was nothing disrespectful in his answer. The time had passed so rapidly that he did not realize it; and he never for a moment supposed they would look for him anywhere else than in the temple. For his mother had long ago taught him that this was his Father's House—and at last he was here!

Home again.—And so he went home with them to Nazareth, his mother and Joseph rejoicing to have him back again safe and sound; and his mother, especially, remembering his words about "my Father's House." And Jesus, still living over those glorious days in Jerusalem, which he would never forget, "advanced in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man." (Luke 2: 52.)

STUDY TOPICS

1. Look up Psalm 114. What significance had this as one of the hymns sung at the Passover?
2. Turn to the map of Jerusalem and find the point from which Jesus first looked upon the city.
3. Find, in the plan of the temple, the court in which Mary stood, and the one in which Joseph and Jesus worshiped.
4. Close your book, and sketch in outline the city of Jerusalem. On which side was the temple? Where was the Mount of Olives? In which direction was Jericho? Galilee?
5. Are the rules for the temple worship to be found anywhere in the Bible? If so, where would you start to look for them?

Remember that the Israelites in the wilderness had no temple. They worshiped in the tabernacle—a great tent which they carried about with them. But the laws for sacrifice and worship were held to apply to the temple in the time of Jesus.

CHAPTER V

JOHN, THE SON OF ZACHARIAS

THERE was another boy living in Palestine at that time in whom we are greatly interested—for his career was destined to be closely related to that of Jesus. This boy's home was near Jerusalem, in the "hill country" of Judæa. His father was a priest, who ministered from time to time in the temple at Jerusalem—very possibly he was there on the occasion of Jesus' visit at the age of twelve. The boy's name was John, and his father was Zacharias. His mother, Elisabeth, was a noble woman, a descendant of the sacred priestly house of Aaron. With such parents, and living in such a home as theirs, it is not strange at all that John grew up to be a good man and that God called him to be a prophet.

THE BOY JOHN

The beautiful story of John's birth is told in the first chapter of Saint Luke's Gospel—how an angel appeared to his father in the temple, announcing that he should have a son, whom he was to name John; how Mary, the mother of Jesus, also saw an angel who came to announce Jesus' birth; how Mary visited Elisabeth, and sang the *Magnificat*, her beautiful hymn of thanksgiving; how the neighbors and friends of the aged priest and his wife rejoiced when John was born; how the neighbors wanted to name the baby Zacharias, after his father; all this wonderful and beautiful story you must read for yourself, if you have not read it already.

A child of promise.—Sometimes fathers and mothers

dedicate their children to God. The service of baptism is one way in which they are given to God; but often they are dedicated specially, like the boy Samuel in the Old Testament story, and given to God for His service.

This is what Zacharias and Elisabeth did for their son. In his vision in the temple Zacharias remembered having heard the angel say, "He shall be great in the sight of the Lord, . . . and he shall drink no wine nor strong drink . . . and he shall be filled with the Holy Spirit . . . and many of the children of Israel shall he turn unto the Lord their God."

A "Nazirite."—The son of a priest was expected to live a holy life—for he himself would be a priest some time. But John's parents dedicated him to a life of peculiar holiness, like that of the Nazirites (of whom we read in the Old Testament). He was never to drink wine, nor cut his hair or shave his beard. Of course, this would not make him holy; but it set him apart from other men, and in solitude he was to devote his life to religion, to prayer and study and meditation. That was the way, so those people thought, in which great holiness was to be attained.

Thus John's early life was quite different from that of Jesus. His parents were much older than most boys' fathers and mothers. His home was in the rugged hill-country near Jerusalem—unlike the region round about Nazareth; and, even as a little boy, he was made to feel how solemn and austere a life must be his when he grew to be a man.

His father's influence.—Still, his parents were not harsh or severe in their religion. They were just good, old-fashioned people who loved their boy and wanted him to be the best man, the truest servant of God, that he could possibly become.

The fine and noble spirit of his father may be seen in the hymn which he composed when John was born. It is often called the *Benedictus*, from the first word of the Latin translation. It deserves to be set beside Mary's hymn, the *Magnificat*, which we read in Chapter II.

The Benedictus.—

"Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel;
For He hath visited and redeemed His people,
And hath raised up a horn of salvation for us
In the house of His servant David—

(this referred to the birth of Jesus, who was a "son of David")

"As He spake by the mouth of His holy prophets,
Which have been since the world began—
Salvation from our enemies,
And from the hand of all that hate us;
To show mercy toward our forefathers,
And to remember His holy covenant;

"The oath which He sware unto Abraham our father,
To grant unto us that we,
Being delivered from the hand of our enemies,
Might serve Him without fear,
In holiness and righteousness before Him,
All the days of our life.

"And thou, child (that is, John),
Shalt be called the prophet of the Highest;
For thou shalt go before the face of the Lord,
To prepare His ways;
To give knowledge of salvation unto His people,
In the remission of their sins.

"Because of the tender mercy of our God,
Whereby the dayspring from on high
Shall visit us,
To shine upon them that sit in darkness
And the shadow of death,
To guide our feet into the way of peace."
—Luke 1: 68-79.

CALLED OF GOD

Nothing more is told us about John's boyhood, except the following, at the end of Chapter I of Luke: "And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his showing unto Israel." The word "deserts" means the open country, John was not a city boy, nor did he even live in a village. like Nazareth. He was a country boy and grew up familiar with the work of shepherds and woodcutters, with the sowing and harvesting and threshing of grain. For thirty years he lived thus quietly and obscurely, unknown outside his own neighborhood. No doubt he went up from time to time to the temple with his father —perhaps taking his part in the service as a priest when his father grew too old to officiate.

John's call as a prophet.—But when John was about thirty years old, "in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar" (28 or 29 A. D.), "the word of God came unto him in the wilderness." This means that he was called to be a prophet.

It had been many years, in fact centuries, since a prophet had appeared in Israel. The people had begun to feel that God must have forsaken them, since He sent them no messenger or prophet. But now, at last, one had appeared, and at once the news spread through the country.

John began his preaching in the Jordan valley, out in

the open country. Like the ancient prophet Elijah, he wore a mantle of camel's hair, with a leather girdle or belt about the waist. And his food was the simple fare of the desert, locusts (or carobs) and wild honey. As a Nazirite, he let his hair grow long and drank no wine. Thus even his outward appearance reminded people of the Old Testament prophets.

His message.—Just as in the Old Testament times, a prophet was one sent by God to deliver a message. John's message can be summed up in one word: *Repent.* He felt himself to be the one described in the Book of Isaiah:

> **"The voice of one crying in the wilderness,**
> **'Prepare ye the way of the Lord,**
> **Make straight in the desert**
> **A highway for our God.' "—Isaiah 40: 3.**

The Jewish people at that time were expecting a change to take place in the world. God was to send them a great Deliverer, the King "Messiah" or *Anointed One,* who should free them from the rule of the Romans, and set up an independent kingdom in Palestine. Then all the descendants of Jacob were to be gathered home to their native land; and in peace and prosperity they should dwell there forever, under the reign or kingdom of God.

But John said to them: "You are not fit to enter this Kingdom of God. You must repent of your sins and bring forth worthy fruits. Mere descent from Abraham doesn't count: you must actually do the will of God, obediently and faithfully, if you expect Him to send you the Messiah to be your deliverer."

What did this mean? People came to him and asked what it meant, and what they must do to please God; and he told them: "Whoever has two coats, let him

give one to his poor neighbor who has none. Whoever has food to spare, let him do the same." The tax-gatherers came, and he said to them, "Stop collecting more than is fair from the people." And to the soldiers he said, "Don't be violent; stop accusing innocent people of crimes; and be content with your wages."

"The baptism of repentance."—Great crowds of people, from Jerusalem and Judæa and all the region round about the Jordan River, went out to hear John as he traveled, preaching, up and down the country. And whenever there were those who did repent and confessed their sins, and wanted to begin a new life, John administered to them the "baptism of repentance." They were taken to the river or to some nearby stream, and there, in John's presence, plunged beneath the waters. This outward washing was the symbol and token of the inward cleansing of their souls. Now they could begin afresh, in newness of life, to serve God and prepare for the coming of His Kingdom. But they must not forget to bring forth fruits "worthy of repentance," to be honest and gentle and generous.

"Is John himself the Messiah?"—This question rose naturally to the lips of those who heard the prophet and who wondered where and when the Messiah should appear.

> **"And as the people were in expectation, and all men mused in their hearts concerning John, whether haply he were the Messiah, John answered, and said to them all, 'I indeed baptize you with water; but there comes one who is mightier than I—so much mightier, in fact, that I am not worthy even to stoop and loose his sandal's thong! He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. His fan is in his hand, thoroughly to cleanse his thresh-**

ing-floor, and to gather the wheat into his granary. But the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire!' "
—Luke 3: 15-17.

The Messiah was coming to hold the judgment! The righteous were to enter God's Kingdom and be saved; but the wicked were to be cast out and be punished! This was not quite what the people were expecting. To them it had seemed that God would do everything. But John made it clear that there was much indeed for them to do.

STUDY TOPICS

1. Read Chapter 1 of Luke.
2. Look up "Nazirites," Numbers 6.
3. Find on the map the "hill country of Judæa." It is not named, but you can locate it from the shading on the map.
4. Some of the Psalms are called "Messianic," since they describe the coming of the expected Messiah. Look up the following: Psalms 2, 21, 72, 110.
5. What did John command the publicans and soldiers to do?
6. Memorize Isaiah 40: 3.

CHAPTER VI

THE BAPTISM OF JESUS

THE news of John's preaching spread rapidly. Not only throughout Judæa and the Jordan valley, but up in Galilee, in the villages around the lake and in the hills, people were talking about the great prophet who had appeared. Men made a journey to Jerusalem the occasion for going to hear John. Groups of young men went down the valley to the place where John was preaching, and came back with accounts of his message, of the listening crowds, of the cries of the penitents as they went forward to share in the simple ceremony of cleansing.

But it was his words about the Messiah which traveled faster than everything else: there was not a person in all Palestine who could hear that message and not be interested at once.

THE HOPE OF THE MESSIAH

The expectation of the Messiah was nothing new in Israel. For several centuries, especially since the Babylonian exile, it had seemed that the only hope of freedom and independence lay in God's hands. When He willed it the change would come. God would "take His great power and reign" over them; God Himself should be their King, and they should be His people.

The coming Kingdom.—This was to be "the Kingdom of God." No longer were foreign rulers, with their armies and their false gods and their shameful customs, to have dominion over God's people. The kings of Babylon, Egypt, Persia, Macedonia, with their hosts of

warriors, had once swept over Palestine, and crushed the little armies of her defenders. But one by one they had fallen. Now Rome ruled the world. But it would not be long until Rome too should fall. Then, surely then, God would Himself take the scepter, or, what meant the same thing, send his "Anointed" to rule in His stead —and the Jewish people would be saved.

The coming King.—Now most persons thought that the Messiah, the "Anointed," when he came, would be an earthly ruler; he would be inspired by God, perfectly obedient to His will, but would reign in Jerusalem just like David or Solomon or any of the ancient kings. There are some old hymns, called "the Psalms of the Pharisees," written about fifty years before Jesus was born, which express this hope in stirring words. Here is a part of one of them:

> **"Behold, O Lord, and raise up over them their king,**
> **the Son of David,**
> **That he may reign over Israel Thy servant;**
> **And gird him with strength, that he may shatter**
> **unrighteous rulers,**
> **And that he may purge Jerusalem from the nations**
> **that trample her down to destruction."**
> **—Psalms of the Pharisees 17: 23-25.**

He would also judge his own people and banish sinners from the Holy City.

> **"He shall not allow unrighteousness to lodge any**
> **more in their midst,**
> **Nor shall there dwell among them any man that**
> **knows wickedness; . . .**
> **For he shall know them that they are all sons of**
> **their God."**
> **—*Ibid.*, 17: 29, 30, 36.**

Revolution, or patience?—People were tired of the Roman rule, as they had been tired of the Maccabees and of Herod. They longed for the coming of this King of their own, the "Son of David," the Messiah, or "Christ." And some men there were who stood ready at a moment's notice to grasp the sword and start a revolution. It was the mad scheme of these "Zealots," as they were called, to overthrow the Roman government in Palestine, as Judas the Maccabee had once overthrown that of the kingdom of Antioch.

But not all the Jews were Zealots. Nor were all the Pharisees like those who wrote or who treasured the "Psalms of the Pharisees." There were some who said, "Until all Israel keeps the Law perfectly from one Sabbath to the next, the Messiah cannot come." This was somewhat more like John's teaching: the Kingdom of God would not appear until the nation repented and brought forth the fruits of righteousness.

"The Son of Man."—And these people thought of the Messiah, not as a warrior and king, but as the divine judge, who should try the deeds and the hearts of men and reward them either with happiness and salvation or with pain and misery. They read the vision of Daniel, in the Old Testament, and understood it as a picture of the Messiah.

> **"I beheld till thrones were cast down and one that was Ancient of Days did sit: his raiment was white as snow, and the hair of his head was like fine wool; his throne was fiery flames, and the wheels thereof burning fire. . . . And behold, there came with the clouds of heaven one like unto a son of man, and he came even to the Ancient of Days. . . . And there was given him dominion and glory**

and a kingdom, that all peoples should serve him."—Daniel 7: 9-14.

And so they called the Messiah by a special name, "the Son of Man." We shall find this name very often in the New Testament, and so we ought to know what it means: It refers to the Messiah expected by those who did not believe in revolution or rebellion against Rome; they believed that he was to be the judge of men's souls at the last judgment; and that his kingdom was not to be in Palestine or anywhere in this world, but in heaven, in the world to come.

There is a very curious old book, called "the Book of Enoch," which Jesus may possibly have read and which describes this kind of Messiah. Let us read just a few lines of it.

"And he sat on his throne of glory,
And all judgment was given unto the Son of Man;
And he caused the sinners to pass away from the face of the earth,
And those who had led the world astray."
—I Enoch 69: 27.

Thus there were several different ways in which the Kingdom of God and the Messiah were expected in Jesus' time. John evidently did not expect him to be an earthly warrior or king, but the heavenly "Son of Man."

THE BAPTISM OF JESUS

And so the news spread that John announced the coming of the Messiah. At last, after all these years, a prophet! At last, a prophet who was himself the Messiah's herald! Such a message had not been heard for generations—no, it had never been heard before.

Jesus goes to hear John.—Jesus was working in the carpenter shop when the news came. He was alone in the shop now—for Joseph had died some years before, leaving Jesus as head of the family. Like John, he was now about thirty years old; the younger members of the family were grown up. He was therefore free to go and take part in John's work. And he felt that he could not remain aloof from this great movement which was sweeping the nation. He must have some share in it: it was his Father's business.

His baptism.—So he went down the Jordan valley, heard the prophet, and received his baptism. For this was the first thing to do, if he was to share in the preparation for the coming of the Messiah: he must do everything which God had showed to be His will, either in the Bible or through His prophet. Who the Messiah should be no one could tell, but everyone must make ready for his coming, in obedience to God's command.

The vision and the Voice from heaven.—A wonderful event occurred when Jesus was baptized. For it came to pass that as he came up out of the water and knelt down to pray, he beheld a vision: the heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God—whose coming John had foretold—descending as a dove and resting upon himself; then a voice came forth from heaven and said, "Thou art my beloved Son; in Thee I am well pleased."

The beloved Son!—that was the name which had been given the Messiah!—the "Son of Man," God's Son, the one who was to stand before the Ancient of Days. Not John, not some angelic being still unseen, but Jesus himself was the Messiah!

Can you imagine what a wonderful feeling came over

Jesus as he saw this vision and heard these words? What deep joy, what a sense of responsibility, what a supreme exultation it gave him! He could not go home now; nor could he stay there with John and the multitude; he must get away and be alone with God. So straightway he went up from the river, away from the crowd, avoiding the highways and villages, into the lonely wilderness of Judæa where he could commune with his Father in solitude.

STUDY TOPICS

1. What is a vision? Name several persons in the Bible who are described as having seen visions.
2. Why did Jesus wish to be alone for a time after his baptism?
3. Describe briefly the Jewish expectation of the Messiah.
4. What was the significance of the title, "the Beloved Son"?
5. Why was the Messiah called "the Son of David"?
6. Who were the Zealots? What did they expect to do?
7. Form as completely as you can a picture of the baptism of Jesus, and then write a description of it.

CHAPTER VII

IN THE WILDERNESS

THE "wilderness" into which Jesus went was not a sandy desert, but thinly populated, open country, northwest of the Dead Sea, where were no farms and only wandering shepherds guarded their flocks. The ground was stony, as you may see in the picture, and one might go several miles without meeting another person.

THE TEMPTATION

Here Jesus remained for several weeks—the Gospels say "forty days," as if the writers thought of the forty years spent in the wilderness by the children of Israel in the time of Moses. Of course, there was little to eat in such a place. And so, like Elijah of old, he fasted; "he did eat nothing in those days."

What he was thinking about.—He had come out into the wilderness in order to be alone with God and to think about the vision he had seen at his baptism. What was he thinking about? It had come to him so suddenly. Like everyone else, he had been expecting the coming of the Messiah; he had read of him in the books of the prophets in the Old Testament; he had heard John describe the Messiah in glowing words, ". . . whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly cleanse his threshing-floor . . ." And then all at once he had seen the opened heaven, and the descending dove, and heard the words, "Thou art my Son."

No words of prophet or seer, of Isaiah or Daniel or Enoch, or of John himself, seemed to make it clear. If

By W. Dyce, R. A.

THE TEMPTATION IN THE WILDERNESS

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he was to be the Messiah he must be a different kind of Messiah than anyone had ever expected. He would not be a king or warrior, leading an army or ascending a throne in Jerusalem; that was not the way in which God's Kingdom should be established. Nor was he the Son of Man standing before the Ancient of Days—not *yet*, certainly. What should he do first of all? What did God want him to do? He would wait for the answer of God Himself. For it was the voice of God which had said to Him, "Thou art my Son," and he would wait until God led him, by the Spirit, to begin his work as Messiah.

Stones and bread.—As he waited he hungered. It was not many miles to some village where he could get food. But no, he had come hither for a purpose, and mere hunger of the body was not to daunt him.

The stones lying about on the ground looked somewhat like small loaves of bread. And there came secret whisperings which seemed to say, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become bread—do not perish here of hunger, when you can easily work a miracle and enjoy plenty." It was the voice of the *tempter*, the spirit of disobedience, who stands some time or other at everyone's side, and bids him do what is not lawful and right, bids him set his own desires above the will of God.

Jesus recognized that to yield to this temptation would be sin. It meant that he would be using his powers, as Messiah, for his own safety and welfare, and not for the good of his people. And did not the Scripture say, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that goes forth from the mouth of God"?

The kingdoms of the world.—But if he will not use his divine powers to save himself, perhaps he

will use them to fulfill the hopes of those who want a king?

It seemed to him that he was now standing on the summit of a mountain—higher than Carmel or Hermon—a mountain so high he could see all the kingdoms of the world. There in the west lay Macedon and Greece, and beyond them Italy, Sicily, Carthage; far to the north lay Asia and Armenia, Scythia, and the rich regions of Syria and Mesopotamia; eastward lay Babylon and Media and far-off India, with their strange peoples and crowded cities; to the south, Arabia with its warriors of the desert and ancient Egypt with its pyramids and temples and its teeming multitudes. Prophets had said that Messiah should rule all the nations of the world. Was he then to become a greater king than Cæsar, whose soldiers marched everywhere in the world?

But earthly kingdoms were built up through bloodshed, through wars and intrigues and deceptions. It was unthinkable that he should aspire to be such a king, even though he were to be a good ruler, the "king of righteousness."

Once more it was the voice of Satan, now saying to him, "To thee will I give all this authority and the glory of these kingdoms; for it is mine, and to whomsoever I will, I give it. Worship me—obey my will—adopt my methods—and all shall be yours!" But Jesus answered and said, again using the words of the Bible, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve."

The pinnacle of the temple.—But how, then, were people to recognize him as Messiah? How was he to let them know?

The prophet Malachi had said, and everyone supposed he referred to the Messiah, "The Lord, whom ye

seek, shall suddenly come to His temple" (Malachi 3: 1). Where else ought they to look for the approach of their Deliverer? Might he not appear before the assembled people in the temple, and proclaim himself as the Messiah, and ask them to accept him at once?

He seemed now to be standing on the very pinnacle of the temple—the lofty tower above the sanctuary, overlooking its very entrance, high above the altar of sacrifice. Long ago, when he saw it for the first time, it had seemed so high it reached almost to heaven. Up there, one could almost touch the clouds or hear the voices of the angels singing about the throne of God. Now he seemed to be standing there. Far below, in the Courts of the Men of Israel and of the Women and of the Gentiles, gathered the crowds of worshipers.

Might he not leap off the pinnacle, and glide gently down into their midst, as the Messiah "come suddenly to his temple"? Would not the angels guard him from falling? It was written, "He shall give His angels charge over thee, to guard thee," and "On their hands they shall bear thee up, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone." But no! It was also written, "Thou shalt not make trial of the Lord thy God." This would only be putting God to the test, to see if He really would make good the promise and save him from injury.

His resolve.—Thus he did not know how he was to be manifested as Messiah. But in fact that was not his problem. It belonged to God. His duty was to do the work which lay nearest at hand—to carry on the teaching of John, to spread the message of repentance and preparation for the coming Kingdom. Then, in His own good time, the Father would make him known. When the hour came in which God wanted men to know that he was Messiah, when the time came in which he

should be brought before the Ancient of Days as the Son of Man in glory, then the Father Himself would make him known.

JESUS' VICTORY

All these other ways were but idle dreams. Each time the method was wrong. Even though his people expected the Messiah to come in such ways, he would not be the kind of a Messiah the tempter suggested. There was only one way for him, and that was humbly to follow the guidance of God. From day to day, without asking why, he would follow the path which lay before him in lowliness and obedience and faith.

Obedience and faith.—Do you realize that Jesus was setting out to do what no one at that time expected the Messiah to do? No one who heard John preach, or who read the Old Testament and other religious books, supposed that the Messiah would begin his work as a humble teacher, going about from village to village in Galilee with a message like that of Jesus.

In refusing to carry out the plans of others and to realize their dreams of a King Messiah, an earthly warrior and ruler, what do you suppose guided Jesus in his choice? It was his faith in God. For he believed that God knew what was best, and that He would do all things well; and so Jesus could leave everything in his Father's hands. It was also his obedience to God which guided him in this choice—the same obedience he had learned as a boy in Nazareth, and which had made him the wonderful Man he was. And it was also his knowledge of God. Whenever the suggesting temptation arose, immediately he knew the answer to it. For years he had studied the Bible and was perfectly familiar with it. He knew so well what it told about God that the

answer to temptation came into his mind at once, in the very words of the Scripture. Faith, obedience, knowledge—these were his weapons in the contest.

How he would begin his ministry.—The period of trial was now over, and the tempter left him "for a season." Temptation might come again, but never in this form. He had settled once and for all these questions. Nothing could afterwards swerve him from his course. It might mean shame and suffering; he might be misunderstood, perhaps rejected; but that did not matter, since this was God's will for him. He had made his choice and he would hold firmly to it to the end. He was already winning the victory over Satan!

STUDY TOPICS

1. Read Luke 4: 1–13.
2. Tell the story of Jesus' temptation and explain the three suggestions of the tempter.
3. Jesus was "tempted in all points like as we are." This means that he had no help for the meeting of temptation which is not available to each of us. What lesson should this teach us about meeting our temptations?
4. How did knowing the Bible help Jesus in overcoming temptation?
5. Point out the difference between the Messiah as people expected him, and the Messiah as Jesus intended to fulfill the expectation.

CHAPTER VIII

BEGINNING HIS MINISTRY

After his baptism Jesus was "led by the Holy Spirit." And his first work for God was to preach and teach and carry on the mission of John.

JESUS RETURNS TO GALILEE

For some time, perhaps, he remained with John, sharing his work and teaching the disciples of the prophet. These disciples of John were the most earnest people in the whole nation. In heeding the prophet's message, and receiving his baptism, they had showed themselves ready and willing to prepare for the coming of God's Kingdom.

John in prison.—Not all of the people, however, were numbered among John's followers. There were haughty Pharisees who indignantly refused to accept the message of this country preacher. They felt no need of baptism themselves. The call to repentance was meant for sinners—and they were sure that they were not sinners. John had even called them "a brood of vipers": and this had completely antagonized them.

Herod Antipas, the tetrarch of Galilee and Perea, was another who had taken offense. John boldly rebuked him for marrying his brother Philip's divorced wife. This was contrary to the Law of God, and John had been brave enough to say so. But instead of heeding the rebuke and repenting of his sins, Antipas sent his soldiers and cast John into prison. No doubt the Pharisees, who scorned this rustic prophet, now rejoiced at his downfall.

John's disciples carry on his work.—Thus John's own ministry was ended, but his work went on. While he lay in a dungeon of the fortress Macherus, east of the Dead Sea, his disciples continued to preach and baptize. They were allowed to visit their master and to receive messages from him. The tetrarch had imprisoned the prophet in a fit of anger, and did not dare to injure him further. Like most tyrants, he was really a coward. He was himself afraid of John, and still more afraid that Herodias, his unlawful wife, might put John out of the way. This might cause an outbreak among the people. So he "kept him safe," as he said, in prison. And after all, John *might* be a man inspired, a prophet sent by God.

Jesus returns to Galilee.—When Jesus heard that John was in prison, he withdrew into Galilee (Matthew 4: 12). Although many of John's followers were Galileans, the prophet himself had never visited Galilee. But it was Jesus' own country, in which he had grown to manhood. It was perfectly natural that he should go there to begin his own ministry.

In the synagogues.—Like Nazareth, every other town and village in Galilee had its synagogue. Wherever there were ten Jewish families in the neighborhood a synagogue was built. If they had no rabbi to hold the services and preach on the Sabbath, and conduct the village school during the week, then one of the older men was made "ruler of the synagogue" and led the worship, and the boys studied at home. In such villages a traveling rabbi was cordially welcomed and invited to preach on the Sabbath. But if no rabbi was present, any man familiar with the Bible and able to explain it was welcomed and asked to take part in the service.

HIS MESSAGE

So when Jesus went round about all Galilee, teaching in the synagogues, this is what he did: he accepted the ruler's invitation to read and expound the Scripture in the service on the Sabbath day. He was welcomed everywhere and praised by all who heard him. His fame soon began to spread throughout Galilee and the regions beyond, and into all parts of Syria.

The subject of his teaching.—The people knew that Jesus was carrying on the work of the imprisoned prophet. They looked upon Antipas as a tyrant and they hated him. When they heard of his treatment of John, they hoped it would not be long now until the judgment of God should take place, and the tetrarch receive his just punishment.

All who had heard John welcomed Jesus. For his message, at first, was the same as John's: "Repent, for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand." Before the Kingdom could come to pass, before God could truly reign over the world, or send His Messiah, men's hearts must be changed. They must be converted, their minds and desires turned about, they must face in another direction! They must seek the Kingdom of God and prepare to enter it.

Differences between Jesus and John.—Although Jesus' message was the same, his manner was quite different. John did not care if he offended his hearers. He was the prophet of judgment; he was the "voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord." So terrible did the coming judgment appear to him that he used every means to urge his hearers to repentance.

But Jesus, on the other hand, spoke with a charm

which drew people to him in love; he won the hearts of his hearers. He spoke to them of God's love and care for them, rather than of God's threats against the unrepentant. He did not avoid the crowds and preach in the wilderness; he visited the cities, he taught in the synagogues, he lived close to the people. Nor did he wear a prophet's hairy mantle, like John—his apparel was simple, like that of his neighbors, a seamless robe which his mother had weaved for him at home.

Where and how he taught.—Thus wherever Jesus went people crowded about him. On Sabbaths he taught in the synagogues. After the service people invited him to their homes to share their Sabbath meal. On weekdays he taught little groups of people in their houses, or walked with them along the road, or sat on some hillside, or visited the fishermen on the shores of the lake.

Such a quiet way was this for the Messiah to go about his work! So different was it from the method of John the Baptizer! So different from the way in which people expected the Messiah to come! So different from the ways suggested by the tempter in the wilderness!

Nevertheless, this was God's way. The hour had not yet come for proclaiming that Jesus was the Messiah. And no one knew what he had experienced at his baptism and during the weeks in the wilderness. But all the time, Jesus was winning men and women and children for the Kingdom of God. They were learning, as never before, what God's Kingdom was to be, when Jesus explained it to them. It was to be a Kingdom ruled by God in righteousness and love. And to enter it men must not only repent and, as John had said, "bring forth fruits of repentance"; they must become

the children of their Father in heaven. And what Jesus did in this quiet way was to make people *want* to be children of God. Even as Messiah could he possibly have done anything greater than this?

This is God's way. Not in the voice of thunder, not in fires and lightnings and figures descending from the sky, not with hosts of angels or armies of soldiers, but in quietness and gentleness God comes to people and asks them to be His children. You know the words of the Christmas hymn—

"How silently, how silently
The wondrous gift is given!
So God imparts to human hearts
The blessings of His heaven."
—Phillips Brooks.

THE FIRST DISCIPLES

One day, as he was passing along the shore of the lake, he saw two fishermen casting their net. They were brothers and also partners in business, Simon Peter and his younger brother Andrew. Jesus knew who they were; they lived in Capernaum, and were among those who had gone to hear John and were baptized. They were men whom he wanted as helpers in his ministry to spread the message which he alone was preaching, and to teach the people who were now so eager to learn.

"Fishers of men."—So Jesus called out to them, "Come with me and I will make you fishers of men." When they heard this they came to land at once, left their nets, and went with him. They had heard Jesus before; they knew what he was teaching; they welcomed the privilege of following him, helping him, and constantly hearing him.

Two other brothers.—A little further up the beach they found two other brothers, James and John, who with their father Zebedee were busy mending nets. Straightway Jesus called them to follow him. At once, like Simon and Andrew, they rose and went, leaving their father with the hired servants in the boat. It was a wonderful honor to be asked by a rabbi to become his disciple. And Jesus was to them more than any rabbi whom they had ever heard, a greater teacher, a more winning friend; he made them want to be sons of God.

From now on Jesus had disciples with him wherever he went. Before long there were twelve. But of all the twelve, it was three of this first group, Peter and James and John, who were his closest friends, who went with him always, wherever he went, and who of all the disciples learned the most from their Master.

STUDY TOPICS

1. Do you think that Jesus, even as Messiah, could have accomplished anything greater than making people want to become children of God? What does it mean to be a "child of God"?
2. Show how John's preaching was a preparation for Jesus' ministry.
3. Describe in your own words the difference between John and Jesus.
4. What do you suppose Jesus meant when he promised to make his disciples "fishers of men"?
5. Who was Herod Antipas?

CHAPTER IX

A DAY IN CAPERNAUM

After calling the four young fishermen to be his disciples, Jesus went into the city of Capernaum. No doubt Peter had invited his new teacher to go home and stay with him over the Sabbath. This was the beginning of his work in Capernaum.

IN THE SYNAGOGUE

Capernaum was the most important city of Galilee. It was not the capital, but it was the chief trading center.

Jesus' work in Capernaum.—Here, as we have seen, was the custom house, where tolls were levied on the caravans passing between Damascus and Babylon in the east and Palestine and Egypt in the south and west. Here were the markets where all the products of Galilee were bought and sold, vegetables, fruit, and manufactured articles. Capernaum was the largest city on the lake. People were constantly coming and going. There was no better opportunity anywhere for spreading the good news of the Kingdom of God than preaching on the Sabbath in the synagogue at Capernaum.

The synagogue was one of the largest and most beautiful in Palestine. It was built of stone, and stood on the top of a hill. From its "porch" or courtyard and open doorway—even from its windows—could be seen the blue waters of the lake, with its border of surrounding hills showing dimly in the distance. This beautiful house of worship had been built by a devout

Gentile (see Luke 7: 4–5) in honor of the God worshiped by the Jews. He was the centurion in command of the small garrison of soldiers stationed at Capernaum—to protect the custom house and guard the roads here at the border of Galilee.

Jesus preaches in the synagogue.—As his custom was, Jesus went to the synagogue on the Sabbath with his four disciples, Peter and Andrew, James and John. When the time came and he was asked to read the Law and expound it, he went forward to the chancel and received the scroll from the sexton (who had taken it from the "ark" or cupboard where the scrolls were kept); then he turned and faced the congregation, unrolled the book till he found the place, and read to them the Lesson appointed for that day.

As soon as he finished reading he handed back the sacred manuscript to the attendant, who slipped over it the embroidered cloth cover in which it was kept, replaced it in the ark, and drew the curtains before it. Then Jesus sat down and taught the people the meaning of the Scripture which he had just read. That is the way the sermon was delivered in the synagogue in Jesus' time.

How we should like to know what he told the congregation that morning! Before long, we shall read about his visit to Nazareth and his sermon there. But if only we knew how he began his teaching in Capernaum, his first address in the foremost city of his native district! But at least we are told of his hearers that "they were astonished at his teaching: for he taught them as having authority, and not as the scribes" (Mark 1: 22). The scribes never taught without quoting the authority of their teachers for everything they said; but Jesus taught as if he himself had sufficient authority, and did

not need to quote others. How strange and wonderful this seemed to his hearers!

The demoniac in the synagogue.—But they were soon to be still more astonished. For there was a man in the synagogue who had what his neighbors called "an unclean spirit." That is, he had "fits" which people supposed came from an evil spirit or demon entering into him from time to time and compelling him to act in a disgusting way. Worse than this, the poor man himself believed that his trouble came from an evil spirit; and since he was "possessed" by the demon, there was no use trying to become sound and well. So he gave himself up to the disease, and whenever his spells came on his own weakness of will simply made the attack more severe.

That morning in the synagogue, while the people were listening in wonder and admiration to the rabbi from Nazareth, the man suddenly felt an attack coming on. Unable, as he supposed, to control himself, he shouted out, "What business have you with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come here to destroy us? I know you—you are the Holy One of God!"

What did this mean? The man himself was not speaking; he had no control over his words. It was the demon within him, everyone thought. Did the demon mean that Jesus had come from Nazareth to Capernaum in order to harm the people of Capernaum? Or did he mean that Jesus had power to destroy the demons, that he was God's Holy One sent for the very purpose of destroying them?

Perhaps the rabbi had been speaking, as he spoke everywhere else, of the coming of God's Kingdom, and how it meant that evil must be put away from men's hearts and from wherever in the world it was to be

found. Everyone knew that when the Messiah came, the evil spirits would be vanquished and either destroyed or imprisoned forever. Some such idea had entered the poor demoniac's troubled mind; and, blurting out whatever words came to him, he interrupted the service before anyone could stop him.

Jesus heals him.—But Jesus was not annoyed. Turning to the man, he spoke as if addressing the demon and said firmly, "Silence! Come out of him." The man dropped to the floor in convulsions and then, after a loud and prolonged wail, became silent. In a moment or two he rose and was himself again.

No one had ever before tried to help the man gain self-control. Everyone feared the demon, and only made the miserable man still more depressed and hopeless. But Jesus had no fear of demons. He knew that God wanted His children to be well and strong in body and soul. And if only men would believe in God and face the demons they would flee.

As the man rose up a wave of surprise and awe passed over the congregation. Neighbor leaned over to neighbor and whispered, "What is this? Did you ever hear such teaching before? and with such proof of its authority? . . . Why, he even commands the unclean spirits and they obey him!"

IN PETER'S HOUSE

When the service was over, Jesus and his two other disciples went home with Peter and Andrew.

The healing in Peter's house.—There was sickness in the house; and so before they arrived Peter began to tell them about it. His wife's mother lived with them, and she was sick abed with a fever. But perhaps, since

Jesus had healed the insane man in the synagogue, he could also drive away the fever.

So when Jesus came in he went directly to her bedside. He spoke to her gently, and taking her by the hand raised her up. As he did so the fever left her. She felt perfectly well, and at once began helping with the dinner.

The news spreads.—The news of what had occurred in the synagogue that morning spread rapidly through the city. Everyone said, "If the rabbi can drive out demons, he must be able to cure all disease." So they planned to bring to him all that were sick in the city. Friends and neighbors would bring the lame and blind and paralyzed. Fathers and mothers would take their children; children would take their parents.

Waiting for the Sabbath to end.—But they could not do so while it was still the Sabbath. For the Law forbade carrying burdens on the Sabbath—even if the burden were one's sick brother; and some of the scribes said that it was breaking the Law to heal or be healed on the Sabbath. And so they waited for the sunset, when the Sabbath would end.

Cures in the evening.—In the evening, when the sun had set, they came. There were people lame and blind and deaf; there were poor, frightened, crying demoniacs, begging not to be tortured; there were others suffering from paralysis, who had to be carried by their friends or relatives. Indeed, Mark says, "The whole city gathered at Peter's door."

The demons he sternly commanded to keep silence. He would not permit the wild, ungoverned words and cries which, people supposed, came from the wicked spirits. To some persons he addressed a word of command. Upon others he laid his hands, with prayer for

their recovery. Many went home rejoicing that night, healed and made whole once more.

At last the crowds dispersed. There were no street lights in the narrow lanes of that lakeside city. But there were lamps burning in many of the houses; and through the open doors, here and there, came the light. Through the night came the sounds of distant voices—people in other streets finding their way homeward; people within the houses talking of the great teacher who had come to them and thanking God for the restoration of their dear ones.

So ended the first day of Jesus' ministry in Capernaum. He had come to Capernaum to spread the tidings of the Kingdom of God. And in one day he was known throughout the city. On the morrow his name would begin to travel the length and breadth of Palestine, and then to the world outside!

STUDY TOPICS

1. Describe a synagogue, especially its interior, as found in the days of Jesus.
2. Try to form a clear mental picture of the services held in the synagogue, and then describe a service in your own words.
3. Why was Capernaum an important city? Do you think that is why Jesus began his ministry there?
4. Tell the story of Jesus' first day in Capernaum (read Mark 1:21–34).
5. Contrast the attitude of Jesus to the evil spirits and that of the people of his time.

CHAPTER X

HEALING THE SICK

THE news that Jesus was able to heal the sick spread at once. Such news would spread rapidly enough to-day. For even now, when we have doctors who know how to prescribe medicines and treatments for most diseases, the news that some man can heal by faith and prayer, without medicine, spreads everywhere and people flock to him. Imagine what it was like in Capernaum when people heard that the rabbi from Nazareth could heal by a touch or a word!

JESUS HEALING THE SICK

At that time doctors knew very little about disease or medicine, or even about physiology. Indeed, they knew less than any boy or girl of to-day knows, who has studied physiology and hygiene in the public school. This may seem very strange, but it is perfectly true.

Jewish physicians.—The medicines in common use were oil, salt, balm, salve, mandrake roots, wine, and the like. These were simply the oldest and best known of "home remedies" used in the east for thousands of years. Of course, really serious diseases could not be cured by such remedies. And so they thought, when anyone became very sick, and their medicine did no good, that he must have committed some dreadful sin, and that God was sending the sickness to punish him. Jesus taught that this was not so—God does not "send" sickness to punish His children.

Or else they thought the sickness was due to some evil spirit. There were all sorts of evil spirits in the

world—some brought on one kind of disease, others produced another kind; some caused lameness and blindness and deafness, some drove their victims into insanity or epilepsy or other terrible afflictions. To guard against these wicked spirits, people wore charms and amulets. These were odd-looking stones, pieces of bark, the teeth of animals, forked sticks or curious twigs, necklaces shaped like serpents, and so forth. These amulets were supposed to keep away disease as well as cure it.

Whenever a child felt sick the parents tried to remember if someone had looked long at it, or had winked, and thus cast the spell of the "evil eye" upon it. If they could remember, and find the person, and have the spell removed, the child would get well.

People simply did not know what caused disease. Only a very few hygienic rules were understood or observed. And their "medicines" were hardly deserving the name. It was quite natural, then, for people to try all sorts of superstitious means for getting well.

The methods of Jesus.—Jesus rejected these methods. He did not share the superstitions because he believed in the goodness and love of God. He knew that sickness was not sent to punish people for sin, because it is not always the wicked who suffer the greatest pain. He saw babies and little children, with whom God cannot possibly be offended, suffering far more than grown up men who knew they had done wrong. And anyway, Jesus realized that God loves people, and does not punish them for sins which they don't even know that they have committed.

As for the demons, whom everyone dreaded, it was no use wearing amulets and charms. They could do no good. Instead of fearing the demons, people should

trust in God and His care. If they would only be "followers of that which is good," no harm could come to them from evil spirits. The spirits could be commanded, in the name of God, to depart and nevermore enter the bodies and minds of the sick. All that people needed was to believe, to have faith and not fear.

The disciples also learned how to heal people in this way. Later on Jesus sent them out on a journey and bade them do this very thing. For of course it was part of Jesus' task, as Messiah, to conquer every work of evil. He, above all others, was the one to drive out the evil spirits by the power of the Holy Spirit, which he had received at his baptism.

The coming of the Kingdom of God, that is, of God's own rule or reign in the world, meant the end of sickness as well as of sin. The Holy Spirit had been given to Jesus—that was the first great sign of the coming of God to set up His reign upon earth. And Jesus was to use the power, which came to him from the Spirit, in making the bodies and souls of men well and strong. For health of the body and health of the soul go together. Both are required if we are to do God's will in the world. Thus the healing of the sick was an important part of Jesus' work.

JESUS LEAVES CAPERNAUM

So soon had the news spread through the city; so soon would it spread still further to every village and market place in Syria, that Jesus had no need to leave Capernaum. He might stay there as long as he wished, and people would come to him from every part of the country, bringing the sick to be healed. Should he, then, remain in Capernaum? That was one way in which his mission might be carried out.

He goes to the next towns.—But it was not the best way. True enough, the people would hear his message, "Repent, for the Reign of God is about to be established." Yet they would scarcely heed it as they should, for they were so much more interested in his power over the demons.

So, the next morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out into a lonely place and prayed. Jesus always prayed before making up his mind upon important matters. He asked his Father in heaven to guide him to the right decision.

After a time the dawn appeared over the eastern horizon, and the dark waters of the lake turned gray, then white, and began to shimmer. By sunrise all Capernaum was astir. Shops were opened, caravans harnessed and loaded, the business of the week had begun—but this was not the chief cause of the commotion. Around the doorway of Peter's house once more the crowds were gathering. Those who had not come the night before, or who had not been healed, were there.—Where was Jesus? He had disappeared!

Seeking for Jesus.—Peter and his friends set forth to find him. They went down along the beach to the place where he had come to them and called them the week before. They went up into the hills back of the town. At last they found him, and Peter said, "Everyone is looking for you. The whole city is waiting outside the house for you to appear." But he quietly replied, "Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there too. That is the reason why I have come away."

His true mission was to call people to repentance, to teach them about God and His coming Kingdom, and help them to prepare to enter the Kingdom as its

citizens, as children of God, the heavenly Father and King. Compared with that, even healing the sick was not so important.

STUDY TOPICS

1. Why were the people of Jesus' day especially attracted to one who could heal their diseases?
2. Does the Church to-day carry on a ministry of healing? Have you ever heard a missionary describe the work of doctors in foreign countries?
3. Was the chief thought of Jesus to heal men's bodies? If he had remained in Capernaum, what might have been the result of his ministry? Why did he leave?
4. Judging from Jesus' readiness to heal all manner of diseases for all manner of people, do you think that God sends sickness upon us to punish us for sin? And see Luke 13: 1–5; John 9: 1–3.
5. The methods used by the people in the days of Jesus were partly "old-fashioned remedies" and partly magic. They believed in charms. Did you ever know anyone who believed in charms? Do charms ever do any good?

CHAPTER XI

THE CALL OF THE DISCIPLES

Jesus now set out to visit the cities and villages of Galilee. Probably he first went to the towns along the north and west shore of the lake—Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Magdala. He was preaching on the Sabbath in the synagogues; during the week he taught the people wherever they gathered. Soon multitudes of people were following him. Wherever he went the fame of his teaching and healing preceded him. Accompanying him were the four disciples whom he had called as he came to Capernaum—Peter and Andrew, James and John.

THE CALL OF LEVI

One day, as they were passing along the shore of the lake, he saw a man named Levi sitting at the customs booth. Jesus knew him, and wished him to become a disciple. But Levi was a publican.

The people of Galilee hated publicans. They were tax-gatherers, who not only assessed the value of property and decided how much the tax would be, but also collected the money. They paid a certain amount to the government for their office—the office was given to the highest bidder—and then made their fortunes by collecting exorbitant taxes from travelers, passing caravans, and their own neighbors. No wonder they were despised and hated!

Jesus calls Levi.—But the shame and disgrace of Levi's profession did not hinder Jesus from calling him. It is wonderful how the Master read the characters of

people and saw at once what they really were in their secret hearts. He knew that Levi might become a true and faithful disciple and so he called him. Just as in calling the fishermen, Jesus said to him the brief words, "Follow me." He did not explain why he wanted him to come. But Levi understood, and arose and followed at once.

The dinner in Levi's house.—It was the custom when anyone became the disciple of a rabbi to give a banquet. The new scholar invited his friends—it was a sort of farewell dinner.

So Levi had a dinner at his house and invited his friends. Levi's friends were also tax-collectors, and they were all men whom the Pharisees described as "sinners." To be a sinner, according to the Pharisees, one had only to omit certain ceremonies or break certain rules which they laid down as equal in importance to the divine Law.

For instance, to buy goods from Gentiles, or sell them, during the three days preceding a feast-day was a sin; or to eat without first going through the ceremony of dipping your fingers in water; or to walk more than a mile on the Sabbath—all these were sins. And of course, publicans were dealing with Gentiles every day, and so were "unclean."

The Pharisees gave them up as hopelessly wicked; they could do nothing for them. The poor publicans, who didn't know much about religion and supposed the Pharisees were right, gave up trying to please God. And so some of them became quite as bad as the Pharisees said they were. Thus while Jesus made it easier for people to do right, because he made people want to do good and be good and please God, the Pharisees made it harder. For they called the publicans and other "sinners" accursed, and made them feel that religion

was altogether too hard, and God too exacting. The Pharisees succeeded only in making such people thoroughly dislike religion.

So when Jesus and his disciples sat down at Levi's table, with the publicans and other "sinners," the Pharisees heard of it and were amazed.

The question of the Pharisees.—Some of their disciples came to the disciples of Jesus and asked, "Why does your teacher eat and drink with publicans and sinners? If he were a holy man he would avoid such defilement!"

Jesus himself answered their question: "They that are well have no need of a physician, but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance." If the publicans were sinful, then they needed Jesus. That was his work—to call sinners to repentance, to prepare them to enter the Kingdom of God. But the Pharisees were thinking only of saving themselves, and not others.

THE OTHER DISCIPLES

Jesus now had five disciples—Peter and Andrew, James and John, and Levi, who was also called Matthew. To these five were soon added seven others. Just when the other disciples were called we do not know. But one day, after a night spent in prayer, Jesus was teaching on a hillside in the country. The multitude, which now followed him everywhere, had gathered about him to listen. He rose up and stood apart, and called to him a group of twelve.

The Twelve.—These were the twelve disciples—"whom he also called apostles"—for they were to be "sent" (apostle means "one sent") on missions of teaching and healing to parts of the country which Jesus

himself could not reach. Their names were, including the five about whom we have already heard: Simon Peter and Andrew; James the son of Zebedee and John his brother; Levi, also called Matthew; Philip; Bartholomew; Thomas; James the son of Alphæus; Thaddæus; Simon the Zealot; and Judas Iscariot.

The others.—Then there were others, about whom little is told in the Gospels. They did not follow Jesus from place to place, but welcomed him whenever he came to their towns, and did what they could to extend the message that he taught. Such were Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, and perhaps Nathanael; there were also women, like Mary of Magdala, who had been healed of a grievous illness; Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward; Susanna; and many others who ministered to Jesus "of their substance."

Some who did not become disciples.—There were some whom Jesus called who did not heed the invitation. One day he said to a man, "Follow me." But the man replied, "Let me go first and bury my father." But Jesus answered, "Let the dead bury the dead: it is your duty to go and publish abroad the Kingdom of God."

Others wished to follow him, but were not worthy to become disciples. One day a man said to him, "Master, I will follow you wherever you go; first let me go and say goodby to those at home." But Jesus replied to him, "No man, having put his hand to the plow and then looking back, is fit for the Kingdom of God."

Another said that he wanted to become a disciple and follow Jesus wherever he went, but Jesus told him, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have their nests; but the Son of Man has not where to lay his head!"

These men scarcely realized what it meant to be a disciple of Jesus.

The rich young man.—There was one young man, who was very rich and owned great estates, who wanted to follow Jesus and at the same time keep his great possessions. In case the Kingdom did not come as he expected it (as a political kingdom, with Jesus as ruler in Jerusalem), then he would still have his wealth. He did not wish to risk anything—he wanted to "play safe," whether the Kingdom was to come or not. Jesus told him to sell all that he had, give the money to the poor, and then come and follow him. But the man went away sorrowful: for he could not face that test.

One story says that he came to Jesus and asked, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus answered, "Keep the Law and the Prophets." He said, "I have done so." Jesus then told him to sell what he had and give to the poor, and come and follow him. The rich man began to demur, for the command scarcely pleased him.

Then Jesus asked him, "How can you say, 'I have kept the Law and the Prophets,' when the Law says to love your neighbor as yourself? For many of your brothers, sons of Abraham, are clothed in rags and are dying of hunger; yet your house is full of good things, and nothing comes out of it for them!" And he turned to Peter and said, "Simon, son of Jona, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God!"

WHAT IT MEANT TO BE A DISCIPLE

Thus there were some whom Jesus called to follow him who made excuses and refused to go. There were others who wanted to become disciples, but could not

meet the requirements. What did it mean to be a disciple of Jesus?

It meant hard work.—Jesus was preaching constantly and traveling over the country far and wide. He was now followed everywhere by crowds, who came to be healed or to see others healed, to hear his message, and to be near at hand when (as they expected) the Kingdom of God came in outward splendor and magnificence. The disciples were to be with him constantly, and so to learn from him the truth about the Kingdom of God and God's requirements of those who wished to enter it. Afterwards they too were to preach the "good news" of the Kingdom.

Then they were to share in his work of healing the sick and casting out demons. This was difficult and exhausting work. It required great faith, and it took bodily and mental energy. Some persons were fitted for this work and some were not.

The conditions of discipleship.—But it meant still more to be a disciple. One had to give up whatever he owned, his work, and even his home, just as Jesus had done. For these men had been called by their Master to do the greatest work men have ever been asked to do. They were to call a whole nation to prepare for the coming of the judgment and the setting up of the Reign of God. They were to explain to people what God's Kingdom really means, and what is necessary in order to share in it. They were to show to people, even as their Master was doing, that God's goodness and love is the true reason for our being good: not the fear of punishment, or the desire for a fine reward either in heaven or on earth.

The privilege of discipleship.—But what a wonderful privilege it was! To be with Jesus day after day;

to go with him and share his work of teaching and healing; to be sent to minister to the sick in other villages, and to preach the gospel—this was a greater privilege than any other which could possibly have come to these men. The Kingdom of God was coming, and they were sharing with their Master the task of preparing the world for its approach.

STUDY TOPICS

1. Who was Levi? What was his business? Describe it.
2. Why did the Pharisees object to Jesus dining at Levi's house?
3. Make a list of the twelve disciples. Memorize it.
4. Tell in your own words what it meant to be a disciple of Jesus.
5. Can people still become disciples of Jesus? How? What does it mean to be a disciple of Jesus to-day?
6. Can disciples of Jesus to-day prepare for the coming of the Kingdom of God? If so, how?
7. Read Mark 2: 13–17 and 3: 13–19.

CHAPTER XII

KEEPING THE SABBATH

At the present time everyone who lives in a Christian nation knows when Sunday comes. Even people who do not go to church observe it in some way. Offices and stores are closed. Fewer trains run on the railroads.

But in ancient times the Jews were the only people who rested one day in seven. The Gentiles kept their shops open and went about their business, week in and week out, one day just like another. And the Gentiles laughed at the Jews for losing trade on their weekly Sabbath. Nevertheless, the custom was strictly observed. For the careful observance of the Sabbath was one of the most sacred customs of the Jewish race.

THE JEWISH SABBATH

Everywhere in the world Jewish families set aside their work and rested from Friday at sunset until sunrise two days later. For Saturday, not Sunday, was the Sabbath.

The Law.—It was one of the commandments of the Law,

> **"Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor and do all that thou hast to do. But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God. In it thou shalt not do any work, thou and thy son and thy daughter, thy manservant and thy maidservant, thy cattle, and the stranger that is within thy gates. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord**

blessed the seventh day and hallowed it."—Exodus 20: 8-11.

We ought not to think that the keeping of the Sabbath was a painful burden to the Jewish people. Instead, it was a "day of rest and gladness" which everyone welcomed and enjoyed.

The Sabbath-eve.—On Sabbath-eve, at sunset, the Jewish mother lighted the Sabbath lamp. As she did so she said this beautiful prayer:

> **"Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who hast sanctified us by Thy commandments, and commanded us to light the Sabbath lamp."**

There was a service in the synagogue that evening, and when the family returned they had dinner. The father's place was at the head of the table, and he pronounced the blessing before they sat down. He repeated the verses in Genesis telling of the work of creation on the sixth and seventh days (Genesis 1: 24—2: 3). Then he poured out a cup of wine and said a prayer of thanksgiving for the Sabbath. Drinking from the cup, he then passed it to his wife, who also drank and gave it to the children and any others at the table. They then dipped their fingers in water for the ceremonial cleansing, and sat down to eat. It was a weekly festival of the family.

The Sabbath itself.—Of course, no work was done on the Sabbath. The family went to the synagogue for morning and evening worship, and the rest of the day was spent quietly indoors, reading the Bible and singing hymns.

The rules of the scribes.—The scribes, however, were not satisfied to let people decide for themselves how the day was to be kept. With them, everything

had to be governed by rules. They defined exactly how far a person might walk on the Sabbath (a mile) and not break the Law. They explained just how food was to be prepared so that no work would be required. They—or their followers later on, after the time of Jesus—set forth the various kinds of work prohibited on this day. There were thirty-nine of these—plowing, reaping, threshing, grinding, and so on, of course. But they even forbade taking out two threads from a piece of cloth (this would be mending or sewing), writing two letters of a word, erasing to write two letters, and similar insignificant acts. "And whoever carries out food the size of a dried fig," they said, "is worthy of death."

This was a part of "the fence about the Law," which they had built up to keep people from breaking the commandments. For, of course, if a man took care not to write even two letters, he would not be likely to do much writing on the Sabbath! If a woman was careful not to pull two threads or do two stitches, she would not do much sewing or mending on the Sabbath! The scribes wished to guard against every possible breach of the Law. Their motive was good, but their method was overdone.

Objections to such rules.—The trouble with all such regulations is that people think more of the rules than they do of the spirit which makes religion real. After a while it becomes a burden instead of a joy. They come to think of God as a hard taskmaster, one who has given so many commandments that men cannot even remember them all. They forget that God is really a loving Father; that He has given the Sabbath as a day for rest and worship; that He wants to give His Kingdom to the world, not to withhold it or make it hard for His children to enter it.

JESUS IN THE FIELDS

One Sabbath, late in the summer, Jesus and his disciples were walking through the fields of ripening grain. There were no roads or lanes here, but only paths across the fields where people walked. As they went along the disciples pulled off the heads of grain and rubbed out the kernels in their hands. The Law permitted this. If anyone was hungry he might pluck and eat the heads —though he must not "move a sickle into his neighbor's standing grain" (Deuteronomy 23: 25).

The Pharisees' objection.—Some Pharisees saw what the disciples were doing. They knew that the Law allowed this, but it was the Sabbath day! Strictly interpreted according to their rules, this was both reaping and threshing on the Sabbath!

So they said to Jesus, "Behold! why are your disciples doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath?"

The example of David.—Jesus answered them at once, "Have you never read what David did when he was in need, and hungry, both he and the men who were with him?—How he entered into the house of God and ate the showbread, which it is not lawful for anyone but the priests to eat, and gave some to those that were with him?"

Yes, the Pharisees knew the story, told in the First Book of Samuel. David had been warned to flee from King Saul—Jonathan had shot the arrow which was the appointed signal. As David made his way down toward the cities of the Philistines he came to Nob, the city of priests. He and his men were hungry, and must find food at once. They came to Ahimelech, the priest of the sanctuary, and asked him for five loaves of bread. All that he had was the sacred showbread, standing in

the holy place as an offering to the Lord. This was never removed unless it could be replaced immediately with fresh, hot loaves. Nevertheless, David was in great need, and there was no time to be lost. Ahimelech took the sacred bread and gave it to David and his men.

If a great hero like David, who became King of all Israel, had been permitted to eat the consecrated bread which was offered to God; if a great priest like Ahimelech had been permitted to give it to him, and no divine judgment had overtaken them; surely, then, Jesus and his disciples were not guilty of breaking the Law of the Sabbath when they rubbed out and ate a few kernels of grain to satisfy their hunger!

The law of mercy.—There is no law above human need. The Pharisees did not recognize this principle. But the ancient Law provided for it, when it permitted the rubbing out of kernels of grain, and allowed the poor to glean the fields and vineyards after most of the grain and fruit had been gathered (Leviticus 19: 9–10). And it was surely in accord with the spirit of the Law to permit the hungry to eat on the Sabbath.

"The Sabbath was made for man," Jesus added, "not man for the Sabbath" (Mark 2: 27).

HOW TO KEEP THE SABBATH

We must not imagine that Jesus meant to do away with the Sabbath, as the Pharisees said. What he wished to do was to free religion from the burden of petty rules which the scribes had invented, and make people feel the spirit of the Law. If they could realize what God intended by the Law, if they could feel its spirit, then they would accomplish naturally all that the scribes were trying to make them do artificially and under compulsion.

BETHANY

How did Jesus keep the Sabbath?—Jesus himself kept the Sabbath by resting from work—he had done this for years as a carpenter—and by going to the synagogue to worship God, and by doing good. Several times he healed on the Sabbath, sometimes right in the synagogue. He also taught on the Sabbath, and brought people nearer to God.

How should we keep it?—That is what the Sabbath is for, whether we observe it on Sunday or Saturday: it is a day in which to rest from labor, to worship God, and to do good. Jesus does not lay down any rules and say, "You may do this on the Sabbath, but you mustn't do that." Jesus is no scribe or Pharisee. What he does is to tell us what the Sabbath is for; and then we must apply that test to all we wish to do. Whatever interferes with rest from labor, or the worship of God, or doing good to others (for example, visiting the sick) must not be done.

It is easy to ignore Sunday in spirit while keeping it in name. Many persons make Sunday a day for mere sport and recreation. Instead of going to church, they go to the country. Instead of doing good to others, they "have a good time" themselves. But are we keeping the spirit of the day when we use it only for games and picnics and drives in the country?

Jesus in the home of Mary and Martha.—There is a story in the Gospel according to Saint Luke of two sisters who entertained our Lord one time when he was on his way to Jerusalem. We do not know where they lived, or who they were—but only their names. Saint Luke must have known, and the readers of his Gospel, for the chief interest of the story is in the characters of the two women. It may very likely have been a Sabbath which Jesus spent in their home.

"Now as they journeyed on, they entered a certain village, and a woman named Martha invited Jesus to her home. She had a sister named Mary, who sat at Jesus' feet and listened to him. But Martha was greatly troubled with the serving; and she came up to Jesus and said, 'Master, you see how my sister has left me to serve alone. Tell her to come now and help me.'

"But Jesus answered and said to her, 'Martha, Martha, you are anxious and worried about many things. Only a few are needful [the Sabbath dinner was a simple meal]; indeed, only one [a calm, untroubled spirit]. And Mary has chosen the good part which shall not be taken away from her.' "

—Luke 10: 38-42.

It is the spirit of Mary, rather than that of Martha, which brings Sabbath peace and Sabbath joy. "Few things are needful—indeed, only one!"

STUDY TOPICS

1. How were the Jews treated by their Gentile neighbors for observing the Sabbath?
2. Describe the Sabbath-eve observance in the Jewish home. Was the Sabbath looked upon as a burden by the Jews?
3. Look up the reference to Genesis, telling the story of creation and the divine institution of the Sabbath.
4. Look up Leviticus 19: 9, 10; and see Ruth 2 for the story of a gleaner.
5. Tell the story of David at Nob. How did his example bear upon the complaint of the Pharisees against Jesus?
6. Do you know why Christians keep Sunday instead of Saturday as their day of rest?
7. How should we keep Sunday?

CHAPTER XIII

THE OPPOSITION OF THE SCRIBES AND PHARISEES

As Jesus went about Galilee teaching in the synagogues and healing the sick, what do you suppose the rabbis thought of him?

The people were enthusiastic; wherever he went great crowds followed him. As soon as it was noised abroad that Jesus had arrived in a town, throngs of people gathered about the house where he was staying. But what were the rabbis thinking about all this?

WHO WERE THE RABBIS?

Every synagogue, where the congregation was large enough, had a minister who held the services, and translated and explained the Scriptures; he also taught the school during the week.

Scribes.—Because he knew how to write, the minister was called a "scribe," or writer. This referred especially to the privilege of copying the Bible. Only very studious and careful men were permitted to copy the sacred Law and other writings in the Old Testament. For when each copy of the Bible was made by hand, it was easy to make mistakes; and therefore only trained "writers" were allowed to do this work.

Teachers of the Law.—Even more important than copying the Bible was the explanation of it. It had to be translated, first of all. For the Jewish Bible was written in the old Hebrew language; whereas, in Jesus' time people spoke a language called Aramaic. This was

about as different from Hebrew as our language to-day is different from that spoken in England five hundred years ago.

Moreover, the Hebrew Bible was written in consonants without any vowels, and without any spaces between the words—like this: NTHBGNNNGGDCRTDT HHVNNDTHRTH. (Can you make this out?—it is taken from the first chapter of Genesis in English.) As the Bible was read in Hebrew in the synagogue service, before being translated into Aramaic, the vowels had to be supplied by the reader! And this had to be done "orally"; a written translation was not allowed. You must never think the Jewish teachers in Jesus' day were ignorant or stupid men, since they could read and translate the Bible under such conditions.

In addition to translating the Bible, the teachers expounded it. They devoted themselves especially to the Law or "Torah" (found in Genesis to Deuteronomy, in the Old Testament). This they explained by certain methods then in use, and showed how it applied to daily life. They often told stories to show clearly what was meant. They made up "parables," and quoted proverbs; above all, they quoted the sayings of great rabbis in the past. In everything but the quotation of these authorities, Jesus' preaching in the synagogue was like theirs: he read and translated the Bible, and then explained its meaning. He, too, used parables and stories and proverbs.

The Pharisees.—Now most of the rabbis were members of a society or party called the Pharisees (that is, "those *separated*"). There were hundreds of Pharisees throughout Palestine in Jesus' time. The society originated in the days of the Maccabees. It then stood for the strict interpretation of the Law, against the laxity

and carelessness of those who would admit unconverted Gentiles to the privileges of Jewish religion.

Later on, as in the days of Jesus, the society was composed of those who were so anxious to observe the Law in every detail that they wanted to overdo it: that is, by doing even *more* than the Law required they would make sure of its complete observance. The making of such rules they called "building a fence about the Law." One of these rules was that which prohibited eating with Gentiles. They were interested in having every possible application of the Law, and every possible breach of it, fully explained. Then, they thought, people would be better able to do the will of God; and the salvation of Israel, the coming of God's Reign, would be certain.

The Sadducees.—There was another party, known as the Sadducees. In Jesus' time its members were found chiefly among the priestly families in Jerusalem. (Do not confuse the *scribes*, who were rabbis and teachers of the Law in the synagogues, with the *priests*, who offered the sacrifices in the temple at Jerusalem.) The Sadducees did not accept the Pharisean "fence about the Law." They were satisfied with the Law just as it was found in the Old Testament. If people would only follow that, God would be satisfied, they thought. They were a rich and contented class of people, and looked upon the Pharisees as fanatics.

THE OPPOSITION TO JESUS

Now we can answer the question, What did the rabbis think of Jesus?

Why were the rabbis opposed?—You remember what the people in the synagogue at Capernaum said about Jesus' teaching that first Sabbath. Unlike the

scribes, he taught "as one having authority" himself, who did not need to quote the great teachers of the past. No one would notice this difference more quickly than the scribes themselves.

And then his healing of the sick and his casting out of demons aroused their opposition. The rabbis themselves did the same; but never with the success which Jesus had. Stories were told of their miracles, and the people supposed them to possess great powers. But no rabbi ever had the following, from all parts of the country, from hamlet and village and town, which Jesus had. "After all," they said, "everyone knows this teacher from Nazareth is no rabbi! The people who call him 'rabbi' are bewitched—for he never studied at the feet of any learned teacher in Jerusalem! Indeed, it is a mystery that he is even able to read!"

They also heard him teaching the people about the coming of the Kingdom of God. Not many of themselves had accepted the message of John or received his baptism. Of course, they expected the Kingdom of God to come some time, but not until everyone kept the Law. And Jesus was teaching the people things about the Law which were contrary to their teachings as Pharisees. For he paid no attention whatever to the "fence" of rules which they had built up. And if his work continued, and still more people flocked after him, it would not be long until their teaching and influence were overthrown. From the start they were suspicious of Jesus, and watched him with jealous eyes.

Growing opposition.—Since they were thus prejudiced against him, everything he did was misinterpreted by them. They found fault with whatever he said or did. At Levi's house they had protested against his eating with publicans and sinners. They objected, at

the same time, that he and his disciples were not observing the fast appointed for that day—when even John's disciples were keeping the rule. Nor did Jesus and his disciples obey the rule about dipping their fingers in water before sitting down to eat: they "ate with unwashen hands."

When they asked Jesus why he did not obey their regulations, he replied, "No one puts new wine into old wine-skins. For the wine, when it ferments, will burst the skins. They put it, rather, into fresh skins, which give and stretch as the wine ferments and so do not burst."

What did he mean? They were somewhat mystified by his answer. Perhaps he meant that his teaching was like new wine; and the old customs, which they were observing, were like old skins. Did he mean to do away with the old religion altogether? Their suspicions grew.

Healing on the Sabbath.—Then, one Sabbath in the synagogue, there was present a man with a withered hand; he had come hoping to be healed. He had great faith in Jesus. One story tells us that he was a mason, and could not work and support himself with only one good hand.

There were also scribes and Pharisees in the synagogue watching Jesus to see if he would heal on the Sabbath. For he could just as well, they thought, wait until the next day to cure the man.

Jesus knew that they were watching him, but he did not hesitate. He said to the man, "Rise up and stand forth." The man did so. Then Jesus said to the Pharisees, "I ask you, Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good, or to do harm? to save a life, or to destroy it? Not one of you, if his only sheep fell into a pit, would refuse to rescue it on the Sabbath day. How much more a man is worth than a sheep!" And he said to the man,

"Stretch forth your hand." He stretched it out, and it was restored, just like the other.

The Pharisees were angry. Their rules required the greatest care in avoiding work on the Sabbath, lest the commandment should be broken. And here was one who actually excused the breaking of the Sabbath in order to heal a man! So they went out "filled with madness, and communed one with another what they might do to Jesus" (Luke 6: 11).

The people honor Jesus.—However, the scribes and Pharisees did not dare to oppose Jesus publicly. The multitudes continued to follow him. His fame spread abroad into the farthest corners of the country. New accounts of his teaching and healing were carried by every traveler. People came in throngs to hear him, bringing their sick to be healed. A great multitude was thus gathered together, and large numbers of people came to him from all Judæa—even from Jerusalem—from the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon, from Decapolis and Perea, and the country east of the Jordan. "And all the multitude sought to touch him: for power came forth from him, and healed them" (Luke 6: 19).

STUDY TOPICS

1. Who were the rabbis? Who were the scribes? The Pharisees? The Sadducees?
2. Why was the Old Testament hard for the people to read?
3. Why were the scribes and Pharisees opposed to Jesus?
4. What was Jesus' answer when the Pharisees complained that he and his disciples were not fasting? Explain his answer.
5. Read Mark 2: 1–12; 3: 1–6; 3: 22–30; in order to discover more fully the attitude of the Pharisees toward Jesus.

CHAPTER XIV

SEEKING THE LOST

THE scribes and Pharisees, as we have seen, were opposed to Jesus. They thought that his teaching made religion too easy. For he paid no attention to some of the practices which they said God required of people. And they disliked the way in which he mingled with publicans and "sinners." They felt that he was in this way undermining their influence with the people.

They said that unless men observed the Sabbath strictly according to their rules, they could not please God. But Jesus said, "The Sabbath was made for man—not man for the Sabbath." God gave them the Sabbath as a day for rest and worship and for doing good.

They said that God loved only those who observed the fasts and ceremonies of washing and kept away from Gentiles. But Jesus said that God is our Father in heaven, who loves *all* His children. He "makes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust." If we wish to be like our Father in heaven, we must love our neighbors, even those who treat us unkindly. We must even love our enemies,—all who treat us meanly and unfairly.

Surely, to hate and despise the people whom we think are wicked will not make them any better. But being kind to them, loving them and praying for them, may help them to see that they are doing wrong; and then perhaps they will wish to do what is right. In this way Jesus' disciples were to be like their heavenly

Father, and show forth in their lives His love. That is what Jesus meant when he said:

> **"Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven."—Matthew 5: 16.**

The Pharisees looked down on the common people of Galilee as hopeless sinners, and so they gave them up as lost. They supposed that such people could not possibly enter the Kingdom. But Jesus visited them, lived among them, and taught them about God and His care for them. He knew that many of them were sinful; but he wanted to win them to him and so lead them to repent of their sins and serve God. And to serve God meant keeping the spirit of the Law, as he explained it in the Sermon on the Mount, not observing all the petty rules and regulations which the scribes laid down. So while the Pharisees gave up the people of the land as lost, Jesus loved them; he had come, in fact, "to seek and to save the lost."

THE PARABLES OF THE LOST AND FOUND

Jesus explained this to the Pharisees when they objected to his friendliness with the "sinners." He told them parables which showed clearly that God loves His lost children and wants them to return to Him. But the Pharisees were hard-hearted men. They were bigoted and narrow, and could not imagine that God cared for wicked men and women.

Three of these parables are found in chapter 15 of Luke: the stories of the Lost Sheep, the Lost Coin, and the Lost Boy. Let us read these in Jesus' own words, as Saint Luke has given them.

The lost sheep.—His first parable was taken from the shepherd's life, which was familiar to all his hearers.

> **"Now all the publicans and sinners were drawing near to hear him. The Pharisees and scribes murmured at this and said, 'This man receives sinners and eats with them.'**
>
> **"And he told them this parable, saying, 'What man among you, having a hundred sheep, and having lost one of them, does not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness and go after the one that is lost, and look for it until he finds it? When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing, and brings it home. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying, "Rejoice with me, for I have found my lost sheep."**
>
> **" 'I tell you that even so there is more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety and nine righteous persons who need no repentance.' "**
>
> **—Luke 15: 1-7.**

In those days farms were not inclosed within fences. The shepherds led their flocks out into the wild, open country, just as they do to-day in the highlands of Scotland and out on the great western plains in America.

The shepherd's life was lonely. Weeks might go by in which he never met another human being. Two or three shepherds might watch their flocks together, but they would scarcely meet any others all summer long. They might see other shepherds and their flocks in the distance; but they kept away, so that their own sheep might have plenty of grass. And also, if the flocks mingled it would be hard to separate them again. Did you ever see two boys keeping their marbles in the same bag?

And so, for want of human companionship, the shepherds made pets of their sheep. They called each one

by name, and they guarded them carefully at night. And if one of them strayed away the shepherd would look until he found it. Even, as Jesus said, if he had a hundred sheep and one got lost, he would search until it was found. It might be some little lamb, its wool caught in a thorny bush; or perhaps it had fallen into one of those shallow old wells which shepherds had dug, centuries before, out on the hillsides of Judæa and Perea. When the shepherd found it he carried it back on his shoulders rejoicing.

That is the way in which, said Jesus, God is pleased when one sinner repents and returns to Him. And Jesus himself was the good shepherd, seeking and saving the lost.

The lost coin.—Then he continued by asking,

> **"Or what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she loses one piece, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and seek diligently until she finds it? And when she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my money that was lost!' Even so, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."—Luke 15: 8-10.**

The houses in Palestine were small, and were made of clay and stone. They had only one or two windows, or perhaps none at all. In the daytime their only light came in at the door; at night from a flickering little oil lamp which rested on a shelf on the wall. The people were very poor, and ten *drachmae* ($1.60) was to them a great amount of money.

Cannot you see the woman in Jesus' story, lighting her little lamp and taking her broom—made of brush tied to the end of a stick—and sweeping carefully until she found her piece of money? There was no wooden

floor in her house: only the hard earth tramped down smooth. A dark-colored coin would be hard to find in the dim corners of such a house. But the loss was great to the poor woman, and she searched long until she found the money. But how great was her joy when she found it!

That is the way, said Jesus, God cares for sinners. He never gives them up as lost. He never turns against them or hates them. If only people could realize this, would they not try to be worthy of His love? Would they not make an effort to please Him? And the Pharisees, if only they too could realize how God cares for all His children, would they not cease to look down on the poor common people who failed to observe their difficult rules?

THE YOUNG SPENDTHRIFT AND HIS BROTHER

The Master then told them another story which makes this perfectly clear. It is sometimes called the "Parable of the Prodigal Son." But there were *two* boys in the story, the prodigal and his brother; and the words of the brother were very important. People always put something of their own character into what they say. As you read the story, see if you can realize just what these two boys were like. Would you say that the older brother was justified in what he said?

The parable.—This is the story he told them:

> **"A certain man had two sons; and the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the portion of your property which will belong to me some time.' And so the father divided between them his estate.**
>
> **"Not many days after this, the younger son gathered all together and took his journey into a far country; and there he wasted his wealth in riotous living. After he had spent all that he had, a great**

famine arose in that country, and he began to be in want.

"So he went and hired out to a citizen of that country, who sent him out into the fields to herd swine. And he was so hungry he would gladly have eaten the carob-pods which the swine fed upon, had they been fit to eat; and no man gave him anything.

"But when he came to himself he said, 'How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare—while I perish here of hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son: make me one of the hired servants." '

"So he arose and came to his father. And while he was still a great ways off, his father saw him and was moved with compassion, and ran out to welcome him, falling on his neck and kissing him. And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven, and against you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son: make me one of the hired servants.

"But the father said to his servants, 'Bring forth quickly the best robe and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet; and bring the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and make merry; for this my son was dead, and now is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' And they began to make merry.

"Now the elder son had been in the field; and as he came home and drew near the house he heard the music and dancing. He called one of the servants and asked what was the reason for this. The servant replied, 'Your brother has come; and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has received him again safe and sound.'

"But he was angry and would not go in. His

father came out and entreated him, but he answered, 'Lo, all these years I have served you, and never transgressed one of your commandments; and yet you never gave me a kid that I might make merry with my friends. But when this spendthrift comes home, who has wasted everything you gave him, you kill for him the fatted calf!'

"His father replied, 'My boy, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours. It was right to make merry and be glad when he came home. He is your brother; and he was dead, but is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' "—Luke 15: 11-32.

Was the older brother in the right? Yes; he seemed to be. For it is true that he had never gone off and squandered his share of the family fortune; he had never broken his father's heart; he remained at home and worked hard and saved his money; he had not even entertained his friends at his father's expense.

Now that is just the point of Jesus' story. This older brother was really a very good man, but he lacked something. And because he lacked it he spoiled all that he did. Can you guess what it was he lacked? It was love. He was a very good person in other ways, but he was proud and selfish. No wonder he never entertained his friends! Perhaps he hadn't many friends to entertain! For the person who is proud and selfish, who is so sure that he himself has done everything just right that he feels he can criticize others, is not the one to make many friends.

And no wonder he was surly and mean when his brother returned! You might expect him to be glad and rejoice with his father at such a time. For the bad boy had finally "come to his senses" and returned. But this older brother was thinking about something

else all the time. What was it? Himself! Have you ever seen a boy who criticized his father, or a girl who spoke or acted as if she knew more than her mother? They were like this older brother: for you will notice how he criticized his father.

The Pharisees, also, were like the older brother. Many of the people whom they despised were sinners, true enough. And the Pharisees were good men in many ways. But they spoiled all they did by their pride and selfishness. They were always thinking of themselves. If they ever did think of others it was to criticize them and "thank God they were not as other men."

That was the real reason why they turned against Jesus—for he was *always* thinking of others, he was always trying to help them and serve them, he was always giving himself for them. And that is why, too, the Pharisees had no place in the Kingdom. They were "self-righteous." God can do nothing for the person who is satisfied with himself.

STUDY TOPICS

1. Contrast Jesus and the other religious teachers of Galilee, their view of God and of the duties of religion.
2. Can you describe in your own words Jesus' teaching about the love of God? Did Jesus practice what he preached? Give some instances not found in this chapter.
3. Read Luke 14: 15–24, the Parable of the Great Supper. See if you can explain what Jesus meant when he used it, in the light of the present chapter.
4. Tell the story of the Young Spendthrift and His Brother, and discuss the words of the older brother. How did his words reveal his character?
5. What does it mean to be "self-righteous"? Are people to-day ever in danger of being "self-righteous"?

CHAPTER XV

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

THE controversy with the Pharisees was painful to Jesus. He had always respected them as his religious teachers. Famous rabbis seldom came to Nazareth, but he had heard of them. Their students or disciples were to be found everywhere in Galilee. Jesus might have expected them to welcome his message. Instead, they were now doing their best to undo his work and to undermine his influence with the people.

At the same time he knew that the people were more interested in his cures than in his teaching. Believing in demons as they did, their diseases were made far worse by fear and despair. Jesus brought courage and hope to the sick, as well as healing. But what he wanted most to bring was the message of the Kingdom of God. He wanted to lead people to repentance. His healings were only a part of his work, not the whole of it. At times he actually had to avoid the crowds. And often, as he was teaching the people, sick persons or their friends would interrupt him and ask for healing.

It would have been easy to give up his real mission and become simply a healer of men's bodies. But Jesus was also the physician of their souls, and his real purpose was to bring them nearer to God. He could not neglect his great work of teaching.

We are about to study, in the next five lessons, Jesus' teaching as it is found in the "Sermon on the Mount."

HOW THE SERMON CAME DOWN TO US

There are two accounts of the Sermon on the Mount. One is found in Matthew 5 to 7; the other, in much

briefer form, in Luke 6. One is in three chapters; the other in about one half of one chapter. Of course, this is not strange; for you often see a story in one newspaper filling three columns, and in another it is cut down to half of one column.

There is another reason in this case which explains why the account in Matthew is so much longer than the one in Luke.

How the stories about Jesus came to be written down.—For many years after Jesus' death and resurrection, his disciples went about through Palestine preaching the gospel. They told the story of Jesus' great deeds and repeated his words, taught them to other preachers and "ministers of the Word," who in turn were to teach still others. So, after a while, these stories came to be told in just one way. And they were still told, of course, in the Aramaic language.

Then the missionaries began to go outside Palestine, where the language was not Aramaic, but Greek. Thus it became necessary to write down the stories in the Greek language for the use of these missionaries and their converts. This was the first written account of Jesus' teaching, and though it included also a few stories of his miracles, it is usually called the "Sayings of Jesus." The apostle Matthew is said to have written this account. It was probably written in Cæsarea or Antioch, though possibly in Jerusalem. But as yet there was no written gospel, like the four Gospels in our New Testament.

The writing of the Gospels.—The time soon came when these new Christians outside Palestine wanted to have the whole story of Jesus' ministry, his "mighty works," his teaching, and the story of his last days on earth, all in one book. So the "Gospel according to

Mark" came to be written. This was the second writing, about the life and teaching of Jesus, that has come down to us. It was probably written in Rome, and, of course, in the Greek language—as almost the whole world knew Greek in those days.

After a time other Gospels were written. That which later came to be called "According to Matthew" was written somewhere in Syria or Palestine, and was based on the two writings already described—the "Sayings of Jesus" and the "Gospel According to Mark." The book which Luke wrote (probably in Antioch) was also based on these two earlier writings. But in addition to the "Sayings" and "Mark," the authors of both "Matthew" and "Luke" had many things to record which they had heard or read in other writings about Jesus.

Thus it comes to pass that of our Gospels the second one ("Mark") is the oldest. "Matthew" and "Luke" have copied most of "Mark"; they have also copied most of the "Sayings of Jesus." That is why, for example, the story of Jesus' visit to Capernaum, which we have already studied, is found in "Mark" and also in "Matthew" and "Luke"—for they copied it out of "Mark." But the story of the Sermon on the Mount is found only in "Matthew" and "Luke," not in "Mark"; for they copied it out of the now-lost book of the "Sayings of Jesus." That is why there are two versions of the sermon instead of three. And also that is why the two versions are not the same. For both "Matthew" and "Luke" added, to what they found in the "Sayings," other accounts of the teaching of Jesus on the same subject—"Matthew" adding several times as much as "Luke."

The fourth Gospel in our New Testament, the one

"According to John," is much later than the writings we have already named. It ought perhaps to be called the fifth Gospel (1. "Sayings," 2. "Mark," 3. "Matthew," 4. "Luke," 5. "John"). It is really not so much a narrative of Jesus' life and teaching as a wonderful argument for Christianity and against the Jewish religion as taught about the year 100 A. D.

THE SUBJECT OF THE SERMON

Now we can see why the Gospels tell so much about Jesus' ministry of healing, and so little, at first, about his teaching in the synagogues. And they tell us almost nothing about his personal appearance and manners, and his ways of speaking and acting, which we should so much like to know. What they tell us is just what people remembered and repeated about him in the years between his death and those first writings in the Greek language which finally grew into our Gospels. People remembered how they or their loved ones were healed of their sickness. People remembered some of his words of controversy with the Pharisees, and how he silenced them with one or two arguments. They remembered his parables—the stories he told to illustrate his teaching. The disciples remembered how they were called to follow him, and how he taught them about the mysteries of the Kingdom of God, and what he said again and again about the conditions of entering it. And especially they remembered the talk he gave them one morning on a hillside in Galilee upon this very subject. This talk, the "Sermon on the Mount," contains so much of Jesus' teaching, as "Matthew" has presented it, that we are going to study it.

Who are to enter the Kingdom of God?—As soon as Jesus began to preach the coming of God's Kingdom

and to urge people to repent and prepare to enter it, they asked, "What are the conditions for entering it? What must we do?"

The Pharisees had their answer ready. They had been saying for years that if anyone wished to enter or "inherit" the Kingdom of God, he must obey the divine Law. And if anyone asked what this required, they would answer that it meant much more than the Ten Commandments. It meant keeping the whole system of rules governing ceremonies of worship and of ordinary life which the scribes and Pharisees had worked out.

Jesus' answer.—But Jesus' answer was not that of the Pharisees. Instead of a long, complex set of entrance requirements, which men could satisfy only if they had plenty of leisure to study and practice their religion, he said, "Fear not, little flock; it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom." God wants His children to enter the Kingdom. He has prepared it for them to enjoy. He is not trying to keep them out of it —as one might surmise from the Pharisees' teaching. Jesus' whole teaching makes it clear that God loves people; and that to enter His Kingdom we must be as much like Him as possible. And nowhere does Jesus make this clearer than in the Sermon on the Mount.

The Beatitudes.—The sermon begins with Jesus' answer to the question, "Who are to enter the Kingdom?"

"Blessed are the poor in spirit;
For theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.
Blessed are the meek;
For they shall inherit the earth.
Blessed are they that mourn;
For they shall be comforted.

Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness;
For they shall be filled.
Blessed are the merciful;
For they shall obtain mercy.
Blessed are the pure in heart;
For they shall see God.
Blessed are the peacemakers;
For they shall be called the sons of God."
—Matthew 5: 3-9.

These verses are called the seven "Beatitudes," or "Blesseds." Do you think they describe seven different kinds of people? Or are they not, rather, seven ways of describing the same kind of character? Jesus is using this way to explain what God requires of those who are to enter or receive His Kingdom. For the expressions "inherit the earth," "be comforted," "be filled," and so on, all meant the same thing to those who heard him preach. Everyone understood him to mean "they shall enter the Kingdom of God."

This was a very different answer from that of the Pharisees. Those haughty and self-satisfied teachers would not, of course, say that Jesus' answer was wrong. But their teaching was so completely concerned with what men were to avoid, with what they were *not* to do, that they lost sight of what people really were to do and to be in order to be like God and worthy to enter His Kingdom.

Merely not to break the Law is not enough. No one really keeps the Law when he thinks only of not breaking it. For he is then trying to go as close to breaking it as he can without becoming a sinner. He is thinking only of his record with God, and he does good only in order to win merit or reward in heaven. He doesn't

realize that God is his Father; he thinks of Him only as a judge or a paymaster.

Jesus showed his hearers that to *do* good and please God one must want to *be* good and be like God. And so he described the character of the person who is good and like God, and therefore fit to enter and enjoy God's Kingdom.

Don't you think that this was the better way in which to teach people? Doesn't it make you want to be good, just to read Jesus' teaching in the Gospels? What a wonderful effect he must have had on the people of Galilee. Truly, he was greater than the scribes, and they had never heard such teaching before. Nor had anyone else ever heard it before.

STUDY TOPICS

1. Was Jesus disappointed in the Pharisees? If so, why?
2. What were the people chiefly interested in when they came to Jesus?
3. Tell how the stories of Jesus came to be written down. Which of our Gospels is the oldest?
4. What was the subject of the Sermon on the Mount?
5. Who did Jesus say are to enter the Kingdom of God? Was this the answer of the Pharisees?
6. Memorize the Beatitudes, if you do not already know them.

CHAPTER XVI

JESUS' TEACHING AND THE LAW

"Do not think that I have come to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I have not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For truly I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass away from the Law, until all things are accomplished. Whoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, shall be called least in the Kingdom of Heaven: but whoever shall do and teach them shall be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven. For I tell you, except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall by no means enter the Kingdom."—Matthew 5: 17-20.

THE Pharisees said that Jesus was destroying the Law and teaching the people to disregard it. But he replied that they were mistaken: as long as the world lasts, not one iota of the real Law shall cease to be binding. What he was doing away with was the burden of rules which the Pharisees had added to the Law. The Law itself was binding. But the "righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees"—their interpretation of the Law and their rules for its observance—was not enough. To enter the Kingdom of God one must do far more than they. And the Pharisees were the ones who said that he was teaching people to do *less*, not more!

The Pharisees, as Jesus later said, "tithed mint and anise and cummin," that is, they taught that even the weeds and wild herbs which grew in Palestine must be tithed, and the tenth part of them sent to the temple;

"but they neglected the weightier matters of the Law, justice and mercy and the love of God."

JESUS' INTERPRETATION OF THE LAW

The Law was the very heart and center of Jewish religion in the days of Jesus—as it was long before and has been ever since. Men supposed, since it was found in the five rolls commonly called the "Books of Moses," that it had been given directly by God to Moses. Hence it was binding upon everyone. In order to be saved, to enter the Kingdom of God, it was necessary to obey the Law.

The Law sacred.—Jesus had studied the Law all his life. It was the first book he read in school; and whatever was read in addition to it (for example, passages from the Prophets and Psalms) was studied as the commentary or explanation of the Law. In the synagogue, the Law was read at every service. The only sermons people ever heard were expositions of the "Torah," for the Law was the most sacred thing in the world to the Jews. In the days of the Maccabees, their ancestors had died rather than surrender their copies of the Law to be burned by the soldiers of Antiochus. They had inherited all their forefathers' reverence for the sacred Book.

The charge against Jesus.—Thus in accusing Jesus of destroying the Law, the Pharisees were spreading a most dangerous charge against him. If the charge was proved he might be put to death. Even if the charge was untrue, some angry defenders of the Law might seize him and put him to death without any trial.

The Sermon on the Mount makes clear what was Jesus' teaching regarding the Law. He takes up one by

one some of the most important commands of the Law and discusses them.

The law against murder.—The Law said: "Thou shalt not kill." And the scribes explained this as follows: "1. Whoever commits murder is to be tried and condemned. 2. Whoever calls his brother a foul name [as, for example, "Good-for-nothing"] shall be brought before the Sanhedrin, the great court of seventy judges in Jerusalem. 3. Whoever curses his brother shall be cast into the fire of Gehenna [a place outside Jerusalem where the bodies of executed criminals were cast]."

"But I tell you," Jesus added, "whoever is angry with his brother is in danger of the judgment." For anger leads to murder. And the sin begins, not when the murdered man actually dies, but long before, when the hatred first began in the murderer's heart. To hate another person is sin in the sight of God. This shows how Jesus interpreted the Law. He showed that to keep the Law perfectly and to please God (that is what the Pharisees wanted to do) it is needful to guard against the very beginnings of sin. It is not enough just to refrain from killing someone: you must not hate him!

> **"If therefore you are in the temple offering your gift at the altar, and even there you remember that you have injured your brother, leave your gift and go your way: first be reconciled with your brother, and then come and offer your gift."—Matthew 5: 23-24.**

The law regarding oaths.—Jesus took another example. The Law said, regarding oaths, that if one were taken it must be faithfully observed: "Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but perform unto the Lord all thine oaths." So if a man swore to tell the truth he

must do so without fail. But Jesus would prohibit all swearing. "When you mean yes, say 'Yes'; when you mean no, say 'No.'" A child of God should speak the truth without being compelled to do so by an oath. Thus, again, Jesus "fulfilled" the Law by showing that it really meant much more than a rule of the civil court.

The law of revenge.—The Law also decreed that when one person had injured another or his property, the same amount of injury or damage could be demanded of the offender: "An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth," and so on. And this might be understood to permit "retaliation"—the right to strike blow for blow and "pay back" the one who does us an injury. "But I say unto you," said Jesus, "do not resist the evil-doer. If he strikes you on one cheek, turn to him the other. If anyone wishes to sue you at the law and take away your cloak, let him have your coat as well. If you are compelled to go a mile, go two miles." If we return blow for blow, and injure the other person as he injures us, when will the quarrel end? Jesus shows how to end it—by never letting it begin. It takes two to make a quarrel!

This is what Jesus meant when he quoted the golden rule, "Do to others as you would have them do to you."

> **"You have heard it said, Love your neighbor, hate your enemy! But I say, Love your enemies, pray for those who persecute you—in order that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. For He makes His sun to rise on evil and good alike, and sends rain on the just and the unjust.**
>
> **"If you love only those who love you, what credit is it to you? Even the publicans do that, do they not? If you salute your brethren only, what more is that than everyone does? Even the Gentiles,**

whom you despise, do that. Instead of doing as they do, you ought to try to be like your Father in heaven; for He is perfect."—Matthew 5: 43-48.

THE WORKS OF PIETY

Jesus had shown that he was not "destroying" the Law; rather, he was giving it a deeper meaning than anyone had ever before given to it. Understood in Jesus' sense, the Law is eternal. "Till heaven and earth pass away, not one jot or tittle of it shall cease to be binding."

Perhaps the Pharisees—or at least some of them—welcomed this part of his teaching. For certain of their great teachers had tried to show that the spirit of the Law was greater than its letter. But Jesus turns now to the standing charge of the scribes against him, the charge of neglecting the "traditions of the elders," the three great works of piety: almsgiving, prayer, and fasting.

Display in religion.—Jesus had said, "Except your righteousness exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees, you cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven." And here is the reason: they thought that "righteousness" consisted in doing these "works of piety." And since God promised a reward for the righteous, they could see no reason why their good deeds should not be done as publicly as possible. They wanted everyone to know how good and righteous they were. They felt sure that after they had given lots of money to the poor, and prayed and fasted often, they would surely be allowed to enter the Kingdom of God and be rewarded with prominent places therein.

But Jesus said emphatically, "Be careful not to display your righteousness; if you do, you have no reward

with your Father in heaven." God cannot bless anyone who does good just to be seen and praised by others.

Almsgiving.—Alms for the poor were collected every Sabbath in the synagogue. People gave this money *in addition* to the tithe or tenth of all their income which was sent to Jerusalem. This care of the poor and needy is part of the noble record of the Jewish race. No other nation in ancient times has such a record. And Jesus did not mean to abolish the practice of almsgiving, any more than he did away with the sacred Law when he said men must keep it in their hearts as well as with their hands and lips. But certain men—"hypocrites," he called them, "just playing a part like actors on the stage"—spoil all their goodness by their pride and love of display.

> **"When you are giving alms, don't let your left hand know what your right hand does; let your almsgiving be in secret. Your Father will see it and recompense you."—Matthew 6: 3-4.**

Prayer.—This same principle he now applied to the subject of prayer.

> **"And also when you pray, avoid the example of the hypocrites, for they love to stand and say their prayers in the synagogue and on the street-corners, that they may be seen of men."**

You could see them any day, at the hours of prayer!

> **"I tell you, they have received their reward already!**
>
> **"But when you pray, go into your chamber and shut the door. Pray to your Father in secret, and He who sees in secret will hear you."—Matthew 6: 5-6.**

Fasting.—Fasting was the third pious work taught by the Pharisees. To fast, or go without food, was to

the Jews a sign of mourning and grief, and so expressed sorrow for sin. They also thought that it made sure God's answer to their prayers, just as a spoiled child refuses food until his father or mother gives him what he wants. So the Pharisees added many fast days to their calendar, including Monday and Thursday of every week (see Luke 18: 12). But Jesus and his disciples did not observe them.

The "hypocrites" fasted, just as they gave alms and prayed, to be seen of men. "If you are in earnest about it," said Jesus, "wash your face and anoint your head—just as you do every other day. Let your fasting be seen by God alone, not by men." In order to keep the Law, to be accepted by God, and enter the Kingdom as God's child, it is necessary to have the Law "written in your heart," as the prophet said. You not only have to do something. You must also be something. You must live every day as a child of God should live.

One day Jesus was asked by a lawyer, "What is the great commandment in the Law?" He replied,

> **"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment, and the second is like unto it: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments is based the whole Law, and the Prophets as well."**
>
> **—Matthew 22: 35-40.**

This, as one of the great rabbis said, was the whole Law, and all the rest was commentary.

STUDY TOPICS

1. What did Jesus say about the law against murder? Is it a sin to be angry? Is it wrong to seek revenge?

2. Why should oaths be unnecessary among the disciples of Jesus?
3. What were the "works of piety"? What did Jesus say about the display of one's religion?
4. Did Jesus do away with almsgiving, fasting, or prayer? How did he say people should practice them?
5. Can you think of any commandment which the Summary of the Law does not include? Name some of the commandments which it does cover.
6. Read again the story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37). What does the story have to do with Jesus' teaching about the Law?

CHAPTER XVII

PRAYER AND THE LORD'S PRAYER

"When you pray, do not use empty repetitions, as the Gentiles do: for they think that they shall be heard by their gods because of their many words. Do not imitate them. For your Father knows what you need, before you ask Him.

"After this manner, rather, pray ye:

" 'Our Father, who art in heaven,
Hallowed be Thy name.
Thy Kingdom come,
Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And bring us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.'

"For if you forgive others their trespasses, your Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive, you cannot expect to be forgiven."—Matthew 6: 7-15.

The "Lord's Prayer" has now been in use for nearly two thousand years. Millions of Christians have said it, again and again. And yet it has not grown old. No one has ever become tired of it, or ceased to learn from it as he used it. We shall never know it so well that it can teach us nothing more. And so we are to study it in this chapter.

To be learned.—The proper way to study it is to memorize it, if you have not already done so, and to use it every day. A person learns to pray by praying.

And Jesus gave this prayer to his disciples in order to teach them how to pray, not just to give them a beautiful prayer to admire.

Jesus' own example.—Jesus himself prayed often. As a boy he learned to pray both at home and at synagogue. By the time he became a man praying had become a firmly established habit. He would not think of making a great choice in his life without first praying over it. Often he spent long hours of the night in prayer, as we have seen him do after the day in Capernaum, and before choosing the twelve apostles. After his baptism he even spent weeks in the wilderness, alone with God. If ever anyone could teach others how to pray, it was Jesus.

HOW TO PRAY

The prayer which Jesus taught the disciples is very brief. It was not like the long prayers which the "hypocrites" offered on the street-corners. God hears every prayer that comes from the heart, whether it is long or short. It is not necessary to say over and over the same petitions, as the Gentiles did. For God knows, even before we ask Him, what we have need of.

What prayer is.—God wants us to pray to Him, but not just in order that we may tell Him things we need. Because He is our Father, He wants us to know Him and love Him. Prayer, then, isn't just asking God for things we happen to want; it is talking with God, and learning to know Him better.

And so the spirit in which we should come to Him is made up of humility, faith, and love: 1. *Humility*—that means not thinking about ourselves and our own wants first of all. 2. *Faith*—that means believing that He loves us and cares for us, and will see that we receive

what we really need. 3. *Love*—not only love for Him, but at the same time love for other persons. For God does not love us alone; He loves all His children.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

So the prayer begins with an act of worship—

"Our Father, who art in heaven,
Hallowed be Thy name."

This might be called the salutation or address of our prayer. Just as people in the time of Jesus, when they met, bowed and said, "Peace be unto you," and just as anyone on entering the presence of a king knelt before him in submission, so the disciples were to come into the spiritual presence of their Father with an act of worship and adoration.

We should think, first of all, not about ourselves and our needs, but about God's goodness and glory. It is He who made all the world, the sunshine, and stars and winds and trees and rivers. He sends His rain upon the earth to bless it and make it fruitful. He brings to pass springtime and summer, autumn and winter. Our food, our clothes, the very air we breathe and the water we drink, come from Him.

"Back of the loaf is the snowy flour,
And back of the flour the mill;
But back of the mill is the seed and the shower
And the sun, and the Father's will."

It is to God that we must look for all things. The true prayer, then, begins with worship.

"Thy Kingdom come."—The first petition is for the coming of God's Kingdom. This is what the Jews were expecting; it was the subject of Jesus' preaching.

The disciples were to make it the very first object of their prayers to the Father in heaven.

"Thy Kingdom come,
Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

That is what God's Kingdom is. No better definition was ever given. It is the Reign of God in all the world, when men on earth will do His will, even as the angels now do it in heaven.

The Jews were expecting a kingdom with an earthly king to be sent them by God. But Jesus taught that, as some of the old prophets had said, God Himself would "be in the midst of them and be their God." There are now in the world so many things contrary to the will of God—crime and hatred and selfishness and pride and ignorance and disease and sin. When the Reign of God is fully established all these will cease to exist. It is for the coming of this perfect Rule of God that the disciples were to pray, and for which Christians are praying still.

This meant far more than the freedom of the Jews from the oppressive rule of Rome. It meant the freedom of every child of God, everywhere in the world, from the oppression of sin and ignorance and sickness and whatever else leads him away from God and true happiness.

"Our daily bread."—Then, but not until they had asked for these greater blessings, were the disciples to pray for their own needs.

"Give us to-day our daily bread."

That doesn't mean riches or grand houses or servants or barns filled and bursting with bountiful harvests. It means, "Give us enough to meet our needs from day to day, so that we may be enabled to do Thy will."

And it doesn't mean that we are to sit down and ask God to send us what we need, without our working for it. "God helps those who help themselves." As the Law had said, "It is He who gives you power to get wealth" (Deuteronomy 8: 18). But it means that we ought to trust in our heavenly Father—"Who knows what things you have need of, before you ask Him"—and to trust Him to care for us if we do our part. He feeds the birds; but the birds are not idle. They build their nests, they search for food, they bring food home to their nestlings.

"Forgive us our debts."—We must not forget to ask God to forgive our sins. For when we do wrong we not only injure ourselves or others, we grieve the heart of our heavenly Father. Just as boys and girls hurt the feelings of their parents when they do wrong, so we injure our Father in heaven when we sin.

But if we expect God to forgive us we must also forgive everyone who has injured us. We are to say,

"Forgive us our debts,
As we have already forgiven our debtors."

Our "debts" are our trespasses, acts of disobedience to God; our "debtors" are those who we think have injured us and owe us something—an apology or the "making up" of a quarrel.

One day Peter asked Jesus, "Master, how many times ought I to forgive my brother when he sins against me? —seven times?" Jesus answered, "I do not say until seven times, but until seventy times seven!" As there is no limit to God's forgiveness, if we repent and are truly sorry for our sins, so there should be no limit to our forgiveness of others.

"Bring us not into temptation."—Lastly, the disciples were to pray,

> **"Bring us not into temptation,**
> **But deliver us from evil."**

Jesus had been through temptation. He knew what it means for one's faith to be tried. He also knew that, very often, what tests people's faith the most is not a desire to sin, but some trouble, sickness, or misfortune. They often feel that God doesn't care for them, that He is not interested in them, if He permits them to suffer. So the disciples were told to pray that they might not be led into the trial of their faith, but be delivered from all evil.

No one should suppose that God sends temptation. When anyone feels the desire to do wrong, to disobey God, it is something within himself that makes the temptation possible. God is, rather, the One who strengthens us to resist temptation and remain true to Him. He wants His children to be brave, strong, obedient, and loyal; and He gives them the power to overcome all temptation. We must ask Him for it, and we must use it!

Conclusion.—It will do us little good to study the teaching of Jesus or the Lord's Prayer unless we make use of it in our daily lives. It doesn't make any boy a good mechanic merely to listen to a lecture on manual training. One doesn't become a Boy Scout simply by reading a book on Scouting. One learns only by doing. And that is just what Jesus said:

> **"It is not everyone who calls me Master, who is going to enter the Kingdom of God, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven."—Matthew 7: 21.**

The best way to learn Jesus' teaching—to know what it really means—is to obey it. The way to learn the meaning of the Lord's Prayer is to use it every day. It should be the model and pattern for all our prayers.

STUDY TOPICS

1. Memorize the Lord's Prayer, if you have not already done so. Find and read carefully at least one other prayer offered by Jesus. See Luke 10:21; 22:42; John 11:41; 17:1–26; Luke 23:46.
2. Did Jesus often pray? What is prayer?—give the briefest definition you can. Is it asking God to give us whatever we want? What habits of prayer have you formed?
3. Explain each of the petitions of the Lord's Prayer.
4. How did Jesus define the Kingdom of God? Was this what his people expected at that time?
5. What is the proper spirit in which to pray? Why should we forgive others before we pray for the forgiveness of our own sins? Read Matthew 5:23–24.
6. Look up and read the story that Jesus told about the two men who went up to the temple to pray (Luke 18:9–14). Describe these two men in your own words. What was the fault of the first man? What was the virtue of the second?
7. Look up the story which Jesus told Peter when he asked how often he was to forgive the person who offended him (Matthew 18:21–35). Tell it in your own words.

MOUNT OF OLIVES

CHAPTER XVIII

TRUST IN OUR HEAVENLY FATHER

In those days people often thought that God was unwilling to take care of them. The Kingdom had not yet appeared. They were still paying taxes every year to the Romans. And whenever the harvest was poor they thought that God was angry with them.

The Pharisees said that God did not love them because they were sinful and did not keep the Law perfectly. If they wanted God to be good to them, and send the Messiah to be their King, they must carefully obey the Law, go to the temple more regularly, avoid the defilement of certain kinds of food, and keep away from their Gentile neighbors.

JESUS' TEACHING ABOUT GOD

Jesus' whole idea of religion was different fom this. To be sure, men must keep the Law—but that meant loving your neighbor, forgiving your enemy, keeping peace and avoiding quarrels; it meant telling the truth, becoming pure in mind and heart as well as deed; it meant being humble and not proud, thinking little of one's self and much of others. That was obeying the Law as God expected His children to obey it.

God is a loving Father.—For God is not a stern king, like the far-away emperor in Rome, who sent decrees which must be obeyed or people would be punished. He is their Father; and His Law showed the way in which men can be truly happy. If they keep this Law, then God's Kingdom will come indeed. If

people will do this they shall be allowed to enter the Kingdom when it comes.

Since God is our Father, and "knows what we need before we ask Him," people ought not to worry over everything as they do, over money and clothes and positions. If they will just do their part, faithfully and well, and trust in God, He will take care of them. Instead of "laying up treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume, and where thieves break in and steal," men ought to "lay up treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consume, nor thieves break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Matthew 6: 19–21).

> "No man can serve two masters—for either he will hate one of them and love the other, or else obey one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon (riches).
>
> "And so I say, Do not be anxious over your affairs —over what to eat or drink or wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than raiment?
>
> "See the birds of the air! They do not sow or reap or gather into barns; and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of much more value than they?
>
> "And why are you anxious over raiment? See the lilies in the fields, how they grow. They do not toil nor spin. And yet I tell you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. If God so clothes the wild flowers of the field, which blossom to-day and to-morrow are burned in the oven, will He not much more clothe you? Why do you not trust Him?
>
> "Therefore, do not burden yourselves with cares, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or, 'What shall we drink?' or, 'Wherewithal shall we be clothed?'

After all these things do the Gentiles seek. But your heavenly Father knows that you need them. Instead, seek first His Kingdom and His righteousness; and all things needful shall be added unto you."—Matthew 6: 24-33.

JESUS' OWN EXAMPLE

Whatever Jesus taught he also put in practice. So it was with these words about trust in God.

Crossing the lake.—One evening, after he had been teaching the people on the shore of the lake, he said to his disciples, "Let us go across to the other side." So they set out. Soon the sun disappeared, and the twilight came on, and the stars began to shine. As they sailed on through the night Jesus fell asleep with his head on the steersman's rough mat in the stern of the boat. For he was tired out after his day of teaching and healing, constantly surrounded by the multitude.

The storm.—On the Lake of Galilee one never knew when a storm would come. Any journey was likely to be interrupted by a squall. All of a sudden the cold wind dashed down from the mountain tops of Hermon and Lebanon into the hollow basin of the lake, where during the day the atmosphere had become hot and sultry. In a few moments the calm lake was covered with waves, and the boat was at the mercy of wind and storm. The water, pouring over its sides, began to fill the little vessel. The disciples were thoroughly alarmed.

Jesus' faith.—Still Jesus slept. He had no fears. Safe in his Father's keeping, he could sleep like a little child. But the frightened disciples awoke him. "Master, Master," they cried out, "we are perishing!" Jesus arose and calmly spoke to the wind and waves, saying, "Peace, be still." The wind ceased, the waves grew less

violent, and there was a great calm. Then turning to the disciples, he asked, "Where is your faith?" But they were still frightened, and made no answer. Instead, they marveled, saying one to another, "Who then is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?"

THE SECRET OF JESUS' COURAGE

That was the faith which Jesus taught and which he lived every day of his life. People do not suddenly become brave in the midst of danger, as in storms and at fires. They have to be brave all the time. When the danger comes they are ready. This is what Scouting teaches, "Be prepared."

What gave Jesus his courage in danger was his faith and trust in God at all times. Was he afraid of the Pharisees and their plans to undo his work? Not at all! Was he afraid of Herod, who had put John in prison and might imprison him also? Not in the least. And we shall see how his courage never failed him, even when he stood unjustly condemned before Pilate, and knew that he was to be crucified.

This faith, or trust in God, was just what the people in Galilee needed. Their religion was one of fear, and their lives were full of anxiety. When Jesus looked at the multitudes following him he was "moved with compassion for them, for they were distressed and scattered like sheep without a shepherd." So he said to his followers one day,

> **"Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me. For I am meek and lowly in heart, and you shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."—Matthew 11: 28-30.**

That was one secret of Jesus' courage and strength—his trust in God. That is what he wanted his followers to learn.

To "take his yoke" meant to accept his teaching and follow his example. That is what the people in Galilee needed most to learn. Do you think there are any people to-day who need to learn it?

STUDY TOPICS

1. Why had the people of Palestine come to think that God was no longer willing to care for them? Is it possible for us to make the same mistake to-day?
2. What did Jesus teach about the way in which the Law should be kept? Does this teaching still hold for us now?
3. What did Jesus mean by "treasures in heaven"? What does "mammon" mean?
4. How does Jesus' action in the storm on the lake teach us the secret of true courage?
5. Read Luke 11: 5–13; 12: 13–34. This assignment contains Luke's version of the part of the Sermon on the Mount we are now studying. Note the bearing of each passage on the teaching about trust in God.
6. Select from the Bible passages quoted in this chapter the several sentences you like best and memorize them.

CHAPTER XIX

THE TWO HOUSES

LIKE some persons to-day, the Pharisees thought there were two kinds of people in the world; one kind whom God loves, the other whom He does not love. The good kind, whom God loves, were the faithful keepers of the Law, the "true Israel." The bad kind were the Gentiles or "heathen," and those Jews—worse than heathen—who never troubled themselves to learn the Law and so failed to keep it. And "the Law" meant to the Pharisees not only the commandments, but also their added ceremonies and rules.

Now there really are both good people and bad people in the world, although most people are neither extremely good nor terribly bad. But what distinguishes good from bad, said Jesus, is not learning the rules and observing the ceremonies of the Pharisees. For people might know a very great deal about religion, and yet fail to put it in practice. That was one grave fault of the Pharisees. They talked about religion all the time, but they "neglected the weightiest matters of the Law: justice and mercy and faith."

WHAT MAKES A PERSON "GOOD"?

What distinguishes the good man from the bad, said Jesus, is this: the good man does what he knows to be right. He is not satisfied with talking about it. He has to put it into practice.

"By their fruits."—Among the followers of Jesus there were some persons who truly loved God and who

were fit to enter His Kingdom; while there were also others who needed first to repent before they could enter. How did Jesus tell the difference between them? His way was very simple. He said:

> **"By their fruits ye shall know them. Do men gather grapes of thorn-bushes, or figs of brambles?**
>
> **"Even so, every good tree brings forth good fruit; but a bad tree produces bad fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth bad fruit, nor a bad tree good fruit. . . . Therefore by their fruits ye shall know them."**
>
> **—Matt. 7: 16-20.**

The two houses.—Then he told his hearers a story to show still more clearly what he meant. For he meant that there is all the difference in the world between a man or woman or boy or girl who actually tries to do what is right, and the person who admires Jesus' beautiful teaching and yet never puts it in practice.

Two men were building houses beside a river. One of them dug down to the solid rock and laid his foundation. It took a long time and a good deal of work to build his house in that way. But when he had it finished it was a well-built house.

Shortly after he had finished his house there came a great storm. The wind roared, the rain fell in torrents, the waters of the river rose and beat against the walls of the house. But the walls held, and little damage was done to the property.

The other man, who was careless and lazy, built his house—of all places!—on the sand. He built no foundation, but just started his walls on the ground. He used good stone, and when he had finished the house it looked as well as his neighbor's. People passing by, unless they were told that his house had no foundation, would never have suspected it.

But what happened to this house when the great storm came? The waters rose, the sand was washed away, and great holes began to appear beneath the walls. The storm continued, and it was not long until the house fell in—a complete ruin. All the labor of building it was wasted. No house remained to shelter the man and his family—only a tumbled heap of stone mixed with sand. It was because it lacked a foundation that it went to pieces.

The man who built a foundation is the man who comes to me, said Jesus, and hears my words and does them. But the man who hears and does them not—he is the man whose house fell in. The foundation is doing what you know to be right.

THE LAST JUDGMENT

Not talking about religion, but doing the will of God: that is what counts, according to the teaching of Jesus. You remember his question, "Why do you call me Master and not do what I say? Not everyone who calls me 'Lord' will enter God's Kingdom, but only those who do the will of my Father in heaven."

Doing the will of God.—There were those who thought that Jesus' own family, and especially his mother, would be particularly favored in the coming Kingdom. What could be more natural? One day a woman in the crowd, as she heard him teaching, shouted out a blessing on Jesus' mother; but he quickly turned to her and said, in gentle words which nevertheless gave her a great deal to think over, "Yes; but even more blessed are those who hear the word of God and do it!"

The parable.—One time Jesus told a story to show how God would reward those who not only wished to

minister to the King Messiah when he came, but also help those in need while they waited. He described the coming of the Messiah, as people expected it to be—in glory, surrounded with all the angels of God, sitting upon his throne to hold the last judgment. Before him were to be gathered all the nations, which he would separate into good and bad as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. The sheep were to be gathered on his right hand, and the goats on his left.

"Then shall the King say unto those on his right hand, 'Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food; I was thirsty and you gave me drink; I was a stranger and you took me in; naked and you clothed me; sick and you visited me; I was in prison and you came unto me.'

"Then shall the righteous answer him and say, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you? or thirsty and give you a drink? and when did we see you a stranger and take you in? or naked and clothe you? and when did we see you sick or in prison and came to you?'

"And the King shall answer them, 'Truly I say to you, Inasmuch as you did it unto one of these my brethren, even the least, you did it unto me.'

"Then shall he say also to those on the left hand, 'Depart from me! . . . For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat; I was thirsty and you gave me no drink; I was a stranger and you turned me away; naked and you did not clothe me; sick and you did not visit me.'

"Then shall they also answer, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison and did not minister to you?'

"He will answer them, 'Truly, I tell you, inasmuch as you did it not unto one of the least of these my brethren, you did it not unto me.'

"And these shall go away into punishment; but the righteous into life eternal."—Matthew 25: 34-46.

The real test of righteousness, which will be the test in the final judgment, is not merely knowing, but knowing and doing. To know the Law is not enough; we must keep it. To know that we ought to love our neighbors is not enough; we must really love them. To know that we ought to be unselfish, and share our good things with other boys and girls who do not enjoy our privileges—merely to *know* this amounts to nothing: we must also *do* it!

STUDY TOPICS

1. Tell the story of the two housebuilders. What does it mean? Memorize Matthew 7: 21 and 24–27.
2. Explain: "By their fruits ye shall know them."
3. Look up James 1: 22–27. What is the difference between the man who merely admires Jesus' teaching, or who talks all the time about religion, and the one who actually does the will of God?
4. Look up Matthew 21: 28–31. Do you see any connection that this has with our lesson?
5. Tell the story of the Parable of the Last Judgment, given in this chapter.
6. Read Matthew 25: 14–29. What does the story found there have to do with our lesson?
7. Can you think of any other sayings of Jesus which we have read which show his teaching on this subject?

CHAPTER XX

A VISIT TO NAZARETH

THE news about Jesus which spread all over the country had reached Nazareth soon after his teaching and healing in the synagogue at Capernaum. Travelers may have brought the news, or people from Nazareth may have heard it when they went down to Capernaum to sell a load of fruit or a skin or two of wine. Naturally, they wondered if Jesus would come home and preach in Nazareth also.

JESUS REVISITS HIS OLD HOME

"His fame went out through all the region round about," says Saint Luke (4: 14-15), "and he taught in their synagogues, being honored by all." And yet he had never been back to Nazareth since the day when he left home to go and hear John the prophet and to be baptized by him! As he taught in the synagogues of the villages and cities round about, he must have pictured to himself the congregation in the synagogue at home, where he had worshiped for almost thirty years, where he knew everyone, and where everyone knew and—he was sure—cared for him.

In the synagogue.—Accompanied by the Twelve, he made his way up to Nazareth. On the Sabbath he went to the synagogue, as his custom was, and stood up to read the lessons. The sexton took down the sacred scroll from the "ark" and handed it to him. It was the Book of the Prophet Isaiah. He unrolled the book and began to read:

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me;
He has anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor,
To bind up the brokenhearted.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives,
And recovery of sight to the blind;
To set at liberty the captives,
And proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord!"
—Isaiah 61: 1-2.

The Scripture fulfilled.—Then he rolled up the book, fastened the clasps of the handles, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The rabbi always sat to teach, and so did Jesus. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed upon him. This was to be his first sermon in the home synagogue. Everyone was listening intently to hear every word he said. He began by saying, "This passage of Scripture has just been fulfilled—even while you were hearing me read it. The Day of the Lord is really here at last. The Spirit of God has been given and It has come upon me. Just as John was the 'Voice in the Wilderness,' described by Isaiah, so I am the one upon whom the Spirit has been sent, likewise described by the ancient prophet."

What his hearers thought.—They had been pleased with his sermon thus far, and marveled at his gracious words. And they wondered, "How is it possible for Jesus to teach in this way?" Never had they heard him speak thus before—nor had they ever heard anyone else speak in this way.

But some said to themselves, "Whence has he such wisdom? Is not this the carpenter, the son of Joseph and Mary? We know him and his whole family. His own brothers are right here—James and Joses and

Judas and Simon—and his sisters too! It is absurd for him to claim that God has sent him to fulfill the prophecy. We will not listen to him!"

Jesus is interrupted.—So they interrupted his sermon and would not allow him to finish.

But Jesus calmly replied to them, "Some day you will come to me with the words of the proverb, 'Physician, heal thyself'; you will beg of me, 'Whatever we have heard done at Capernaum, do here also in your own home.' But no prophet is honored in his own country or by his own family: only strangers appreciate his message.

"Was Elijah honored in Israel? No—there were many widows in Israel in his days, when famine lasted for three years and a half; but the prophet could help no one in Israel. He had to go to Zarephath, near Sidon, outside the Holy Land, where he brought God's blessing upon a poor Gentile.

"It was just as true in the days of Elisha. There were lepers enough in Israel; but it was Naaman, a Syrian, who came to him for help."

He is cast out of the synagogue.—This was more than the congregation could stand! It was bad enough to have their village carpenter claiming to have a message from God and to be the fulfiller of prophecy. But to hear him say that God preferred Gentiles above the children of Israel—whether or not it had been true in the days of the old prophets—they would not listen to such doctrine now.

Can you imagine people thus hating Jesus and despising his teaching? Can you realize what prejudice and bigotry and meanness mastered the congregation that day in the Nazareth synagogue?

They were all "filled with wrath," and led him out to

the brow of the hill on which Nazareth was built in order to throw him down headlong. The very hilltop where he had played as a boy and watched the caravans in the valley! And the angry men about him had once been his playfellows, long ago!

Jesus unafraid —But he looked them straight in the eye without the tremor of a single muscle. His very attitude made them afraid to touch him. Without a word, he passed through the crowd and went his way.

The one who had slept in the boat while the storm raged, and who not only was unafraid himself, but could also make others brave, was not likely to quail before his one-time neighbors when they turned against him.

THE RESULTS OF HIS VISIT

In Nazareth "he could do no mighty work," says the Gospel according to Mark, "except that he laid his hands upon a few sick persons and healed them. And he marveled at their unbelief" (Mark 6: 5–6).

The suspicion of his neighbors.—The people of Nazareth, as a whole, had turned against him. They could not believe that Jesus, whom they had known from boyhood, had a mission from God. It is often so: the great man—poet, preacher, inventor, statesman—is not appreciated by his own neighbors, who ought to know him best.

Their disbelief soon passed into suspicion, and then into gossip and slander. They said, "He cannot be in his right mind. He has gone insane over this idea of the Kingdom of God which John preached. For he is no rabbi or prophet, but only a carpenter."

The libel, "By Beelzebub."—The Pharisees, who were now doing all they could to ruin Jesus, welcomed the story of his rejection in Nazareth. The slander

that he was insane was soon repeated by the Pharisees, and of course they added to it.

It was impossible to deny that Jesus healed people. Everyone knew that. But the scribes and Pharisees asked, "Where did he get his power to heal? He says, 'The Spirit of God is upon me.' But don't you believe him! His power comes from the strongest of all the evil spirits, Beelzebub." Thus they did not deny his "mighty works," but they explained them as done by power received from the devil.

Jesus' answer.—Jesus' answer was simple and reasonable. If anyone was fair and honest in mind and not afraid to disagree with the scribes and Pharisees he could not help being persuaded.

> **"Do the scribes say that I cast out demons by the power of a demon? How can Satan cast out Satan? If Satan—or Beelzebub, or whatever name they give the prince of darkness—is casting out Satan, how long will his kingdom last? If he has already turned against himself, it is clear that the kingdom of evil is at an end.**
>
> **"They say that I cast out demons by the power of a demon. By whose power, then, do their own disciples cast out evil spirits? Therefore, they shall be their judges.**
>
> **"But if my statement is true, and instead of healing the sick by the power of Satan, I really am doing it by the power of God, then surely this proves that the Kingdom of God is coming to pass. For Satan's kingdom is being destroyed. And when Satan's reign is ended, God's reign will be complete.**
>
> **"They say that I cast out demons by the power of a demon. Do they mean that to heal the sick, cure the insane, convert the sinful, is working for Satan and not for God? That is blasphemy! It is not a**

slander against me: it is a libel against the goodness and mercy of God!"—Matthew 12: 24-32.

The scribes never replied to that argument.

Jesus' family becomes alarmed.—A terrible conflict seemed at hand. The people of Galilee, outside Nazareth, welcomed Jesus and loved him. Great crowds gathered about him wherever he went. But the authorities, the scribes and Pharisees, were determined to put him out of the way. Either they must get him out of the way, they felt, before his influence grew any greater, or he would succeed, and that would be the end of their hold upon the people.

His own family became alarmed over him. It might be true that he was "beside himself." The strain of overwork, the constant teaching and healing, the demands of the crowd about him, may have worn him out. The enthusiasm of the movement begun by John, the ardent preparation for the coming of God's Kingdom, may have carried him too far. And they had seen the danger he was in, the Sabbath he spent at Nazareth.

Thus they thought. They feared for his safety. So his mother and brothers went down to Capernaum, whither he had returned after leaving Nazareth, in order to bring him home. Here they found him, in a house, surrounded as usual by a multitude of listeners. So they sent in word that they had come for him.

Someone said to him, "Behold, your mother and your brothers are outside, waiting to see you." But he merely replied, " 'My mother and my brothers?'—Behold, these are my mother and my brothers, right here before me. For whoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother and sister and mother!"

Even his own family had failed to understand him!

Even their kindness and good intentions were mistaken, for they did not believe his message!

STUDY TOPICS

1. Review Chapter 3 for the location and description of Nazareth.
2. Who were Elijah and Elisha? Who was Naaman? See 1 Kings 17 and 2 Kings 5.
3. Describe Jesus' visit to Nazareth, and tell its results. Read Luke 4: 16–31.
4. What was Jesus' answer to the charge that he healed the sick by the power of Beelzebub?
5. Why was Jesus' family alarmed about him?
6. What did Jesus mean when he said that his true family was made up of those who hear the word of God and do His will?
7. Memorize Isaiah 61: 1–2.
8. Tell how Jesus' work of teaching and healing was a fulfillment of the prophecy.

CHAPTER XXI

A MESSAGE FROM JOHN

After John was cast into prison by Herod Antipas (see Chapter 8), his disciples carried on his work of teaching and baptizing. The tetrarch was "keeping John safe" in prison, so he said, from the schemes of the wicked Herodias. Accordingly, the prophet's disciples were permitted to visit him from time to time, and bring him reports of their own work and news of the outside world. Of course, they told him about Jesus, the wonderful accounts of his teaching which had come to them, and of his healing the sick. Everyone said, "A great prophet has risen up among us: God has visited His people at last!"

JOHN'S MESSENGERS

John had preached, as you remember, that "one mightier" than himself was soon to come and hold the judgment and set up God's Kingdom on earth. As he lay in prison, now, pondering what his disciples told him from time to time about Jesus, he began to wonder if this could be the one whose coming he had been sent to proclaim. True, this was not the way the Messiah was expected to come by the people generally. Nor had he himself looked for such a Messiah. For Jesus was not a judge, but a teacher. He did not seem much like a man separating trodden wheat from chaff, shovel in hand, tossing the threshed grain into the wind—as John had described the Messiah. Instead, he was more like a sower, scattering seed, waiting for it to take root in the hearts of men.

Still, Jesus might be the Messiah, after all; or at least another prophet, like himself; or perhaps he was the "Messenger of the Covenant," whom God was to send before the "great and terrible Day" of His own coming.

"Are you the Messiah?"—So he chose out two of his trusted disciples, and sent them to Jesus with the simple message, "Art thou he that cometh, or shall we look for another?"

When the men came they found Jesus, as usual, surrounded by the people. He was teaching and healing; for the sick and afflicted came or were brought to him in great numbers from every quarter. While the disciples of John stood there, they saw with their own eyes what was taking place. The sick were actually made well, the helpless made strong.

Jesus' reply.—Jesus' reply was as simple as John's question.

> **"Go your way, and tell John what you yourselves have seen and heard. The blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them."—Luke 7: 22.**

They could see with their own eyes that the prophecy of Isaiah, which Jesus had read in the synagogue at Nazareth, was being fulfilled. This was the proof that John needed. But Jesus would not say yet whether he was the Christ or not. This was not for public information. To tell it broadcast would mean the end of his ministry at once. For he was not the kind of a Messiah that everyone expected.

But let John not give up hope! Others might misunderstand and disbelieve, but let John take courage. So Jesus added this tender message to the imprisoned

prophet, "Tell him, 'Blessed is he who finds no occasion for stumbling in me.' "

And to his own disciples Jesus said, "Blessed are the eyes that see the things that you see; and the ears that hear what you hear! For I tell you that many prophets and kings have desired to see the things that you see and have not seen them, and to hear the things that you hear, and have not heard them."

JESUS' WORDS ABOUT JOHN

What the prophet said when his disciples returned with Jesus' message we do not know. No doubt he was cheered in his lonely cell by the news of Jesus' mighty works, and by Jesus' assurance that they were really signs of the coming Kingdom.

Who is John?—When the messengers had departed Jesus began to say to the multitudes,

> **"What is it that you went out into the wilderness to see? There are acres of wild reeds out there, shaking in the wind—but surely you did not go out to look at them! Or did you go out to look at some man clothed in soft raiment? Hardly!—such sights are to be seen nearer home, in the courts of kings, where they wear gorgeous apparel and live delicately every day.**
>
> **"What really did you go out to see? A prophet?—Yes, and I tell you, much more than a prophet! For this is none other than the one of whom it is written,**
>
> **" 'Behold, I send My messenger before thy face,**
> **Who shall prepare the way before thee,'**
>
> **—he has come as the Messiah's herald.**
>
> **"He was no quivering reed—did anyone ever see him tremble before Herod and his wicked wife? He was no luxury-loving courtier—his clothing was rough and his food the plainest. Who was he then?**

—none other than God's own messenger; he was the 'Messenger of the Covenant.'

"He was Elijah returned to earth, as the Book of Malachi says. He was sent 'to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers,' the great Converter, whom the rabbis say must come just before the Messiah arrives."—Luke 7: 24-27.

A PROPHET'S FATE

Even though John was in prison, he was still God's Messenger. For that was the way men had always treated God's messengers—by persecution, imprisonment, stoning, death. It even began to appear that some such end might be awaiting Jesus himself.

Herod Antipas had tried to excuse himself for imprisoning John when he said that he did it to "keep him safe." But the excuse was false, and the day soon arrived when this became evident.

Herod's birthday feast.—The tetrarch's birthday came around, and a great banquet was given in his honor at Tiberias. The officers of the government and of the army, friends and acquaintances from other parts of the province, rich and prominent Gentiles doing business in Galilee—all these were invited.

Part of the entertainment was a dance performed by the beautiful daughter of Herodias, Salome—who was Herod's niece (and now step-daughter by his unlawful marriage with Herodias). Herod was greatly pleased with her dancing, and so were his guests. Half-drunk, and not realizing what he said, he promised with an oath to give the girl anything she asked, up to the half of his kingdom. It was the foolish promise of a brutal and powerful man with just enough conscience to make him keep it.

Salome hardly knew what to say to the king, and so she asked her mother. "What shall I ask him to give me?" she said. The wicked Herodias saw that at last the opportunity had come for her to take vengeance on John. She replied, "Ask him to give you the head of John the Baptist!"

John beheaded.—It was too late for Herod to take back his promise. Even though he was secretly sorry, he wanted to be a "good fellow" and a "sport" in the eyes of his guests. So he sent a soldier to comply with Salome's request. John was beheaded in prison. "And when his disciples heard thereof, they came and took up his body and laid it in a tomb."

Such was the end of the greatest man of his generation next to Jesus: "a prophet and more than a prophet," God's own messenger to His people and the herald of the coming of the Messiah. He had been "Elijah come again," as the angel said before he was born (Luke 1:15–17).

He was slain to satisfy the whim of a child not old enough to know what she wanted; to satisfy the lust for vengeance of a wicked, intriguing woman; to enable a brutal, half drunken tyrant to keep his silly word.

In such a world do you wonder that Jesus foresaw what might be his own fate? But no more than John had been was Jesus one who put his own safety ahead of the work for God which he had undertaken. That came first, whatever Herod Antipas or the scribes and Pharisees might try to do to him.

STUDY TOPICS

1. What did John's disciples do after the prophet was cast into prison?
2. Tell why John was imprisoned.

3. What was Jesus' answer to the messengers from John? Explain its significance.
4. What was meant by the identification of John with Elijah? What was Elijah expected to do when he returned to earth, according to the hopes of the people? Look up Malachi 4: 5–6.
5. Tell the story of Herod's birthday dinner and the death of John.

CHAPTER XXII

TEACHING BY PARABLES

About the oldest things in the world are stories. Long before the pyramids of Egypt were built people told stories—and some of them are now found in the Bible. Long before there were any Greek poets, people told the stories which now are found in Homer. And the stories of Æsop—"Æsop's Fables"—are among the very oldest stories in the whole world: they were told in Greece and Egypt and Persia and India long before men began to write books.

The stories of Æsop are called "fables" because they were made up for the purpose of teaching certain lessons. The "parables" of Jesus are somewhat like "fables," only they are more beautiful and more like what really happens. Jesus did not, like Æsop, imagine that trees and animals can talk. The stories he told were about things which happen around us every day of our lives.

Jesus constantly used parables in his teaching. It was hard for his hearers to understand unless he used such stories. And thus also they remembered what he taught them much better than when he preached from the Law. Who could forget the ending of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus' story of the two houses?

A DAY OF PARABLES

After Jesus' death someone, perhaps it was Peter, remembered a day when Jesus sat by the lakeside and taught the people "many things in parables." Some of

those parables have been preserved in the gospels (Mark 4, Matthew 13, Luke 8), and we are going to study them in this chapter.

Beside the sea.—We can imagine what that day was like. It was still summer. People were following Jesus in crowds, having come long distances from their homes to see and hear him. So great was the crowd on this particular day that he could not be heard by all as they gathered about him on the shore. So he entered a boat and sat out on the water a few feet from land.

The Parable of the Sower.—He was teaching them, as usual, about the Kingdom of God, about the right way in which to prepare for its coming, about the kind of persons God wants for its members, about the way in which it will come. And he told them this story:

> **"Behold, the sower went forth to sow; and it came to pass, as he sowed, some of the seed fell by the wayside, and birds came and devoured it. Some fell on stony ground, where it had but little earth; and at once it sprang up, because it had no depth of earth. But when the sun arose, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away. Still other seed fell among thorns; and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no grain. Only a part of the seed fell upon good ground, where it took root and grew up and produced thirty, sixty, and even a hundred-fold.**
>
> **"He that has ears to hear, let him hear."—Mark 4: 3-9.**

What did Jesus mean by this parable? What do the different kinds of soil represent?

Any day in spring you could see the sowers going about over the fields scattering their millet and barley seed. But Jesus was not talking about such seed.

"He that has ears to hear, let him hear!" One must try to understand what he meant. The disciples were not sure that they understood, and so they asked what the parable signified.

The different kinds of soil, Jesus told them, represent different kinds of people. They all hear the message of Jesus, but some respond and some do not. Some hear, and pay no attention—like the soil in which the seed does not even take root. Others hear, and "endure for a little while"; but as soon as trouble or opposition arises they give up—like the soil which the hot sun dries up into clods, withering the tiny roots of the plants. Still others, who are like the thorny, weed-covered soil, hear the message about God and His Kingdom; but they are proud and self-satisfied and indifferent; the seed is choked and dies. Only a few bear fruit—but these bear thirty, sixty, a hundredfold! These are the persons who "hear the word of God and do it"; they are the ones whom Jesus described in the Beatitudes, in the story of the two houses (the wise house-builder), and whom he called his true family, "brothers and sisters and mother."

The Parable of the Mustard Seed.—But how great is the harvest even from the few seeds which fall on good soil, and sprout and spring up and produce the crop! The beginning is small, the result is great. So is the Kingdom of God. Only a few persons really heed the message. But God can always use the few. He does not "despise the day of small things."

No one, in those days, expected the Kingdom of God to start with a few—they expected it to come suddenly, like lightning perhaps; or with an army of soldiers, and a great war; with a king in Jerusalem, and angels fighting for them in the skies. But Jesus knew that God's

Kingdom was not to come in that way. God could use even the small beginnings, the few persons among Jesus' crowd of followers who were really true disciples.

> **"The Kingdom of God is like a mustard seed; when it is sown, it is the smallest of all seeds. But when the mustard plant grows up it is larger than any other shrub. It puts forth great branches and becomes a tree, so that the birds of heaven come and lodge in it."—Mark 4: 31-32.**

The Seed Growing Secretly.—How the seed grows, no one can tell. It is buried in the earth, warmed by the sun, moistened by the rain. After a while the tiny roots reach down deeper into the soil, and the stalk pushes up toward the air and the sunlight. Day by day it grows, until at last it ripens, and the harvest comes. But no one can tell how or why it has grown!

That also is like the Kingdom of God. Its beginnings are small, like a tiny seed. No one can force it to grow, no one can keep it from growing. Just as God makes the grass and the grain to grow, said Jesus, so He is bringing His Kingdom to pass. You cannot see it coming, for it comes very slowly, like the grain growing in the fields; but nothing can hinder its coming—for it is God Himself who is bringing it to pass.

> **"First the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear: at last comes the harvest!"—Mark 4: 28-29.**

Other parables.—Then he told other parables to show how men ought to welcome the message of the Kingdom of God, how they ought to make every sacrifice which might be necessary for them to enter it.

> **"It is like a man finding treasure buried in a field. When he finds it, he puts it back, and then goes and**

sells all that he has and buys the field. For the treasure, which will then be his, is worth many times the price he pays for the field.

"Or it is like a merchant seeking goodly pearls. When he finds one pearl of great price, he goes and sells all that he has, and buys it."—Matthew 13: 44-46.

Preparation for the Kingdom of God.—That is how men ought to prepare for the Kingdom of God. When they hear about it they ought to try by every means in their power to enter it, to get possession of it. Some persons may have to sell their goods and give to the poor; some may have to restore what they have wrongfully taken away from others; some may have to confess their sins, and ask forgiveness; some may have to begin all over again, and live pure, upright, conscientious lives before God and their neighbors.

But whatever the price, it is not too much to pay for the privilege of entering God's Kingdom and becoming one of His children. For the Kingdom of God is worth more than everything else in the world.

"What does it profit a man?"—Jesus asked the question one time, "What does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and then lose his life?"

That is just what people sometimes do. They sacrifice their conscience for some pleasure—as when a boy makes a false excuse in order to see a ball game, or helps himself to money or other things which do not belong to him. For the sake of a little happiness right now they make themselves untrustworthy for years to come.

Obedience and honesty may seem hard at the time, but a clear conscience is worth everything. God wants people who can be trusted as members of His Kingdom.

A clear conscience is one test of the citizen of God's Kingdom.

STUDY TOPICS

1. What is the difference between a parable and a fable? Show the difference between the fables of Æsop and the parables of Jesus.
2. Why did Jesus use parables in his teaching?
3. Tell the story of the Parable of the Sower, and explain it.
4. Give the Parable of the Mustard Seed in your own words, and explain it.
5. Tell what Jesus said men must do to enter the Kingdom of God.
6. What does it mean to have a clear conscience? What *is* conscience?

CHAPTER XXIII

THE DISCIPLES' FAITH IN JESUS

THE crime of Herod the tetrarch in beheading John caused mourning throughout the nation. Some of those who had received him as a prophet and accepted his message and his baptism began to wonder if the Messiah was really coming after all. His disciples now turned to Jesus. He assured them that John indeed was the promised Messenger, "Elijah who was to come," even though men "had done unto him as they would." Prophets had always been persecuted and many of them put to death.

THE PHARISEES' THREAT

The Pharisees did not mourn John's death. Instead, they saw that his fate could be used to hinder the work of Jesus. They could make it appear that John had been mistaken about the coming of the Messiah, and that Jesus was therefore likewise mistaken. And moreover, they could tell him that Herod would put him to death in the same way unless he ceased preaching and healing.

"Get thee hence!"—They succeeded in interesting some of the courtiers of Herod Antipas in their scheme. Herod himself was afraid of Jesus, and his conscience troubled him somewhat over his crime against John. When they told him about Jesus and his wonderful works he became nervous and said, "This must be John the Baptist, risen from the dead: therefore these powers work in him." For he supposed that only a

person risen from the grave could do such great works as Jesus was doing.

But his courtiers, and the scribes and Pharisees, were not superstitious (so at least they themselves thought): they hated Jesus, and this was their opportunity to put him out of the way. So they sent him word, "Get out of Galilee at once! Herod is seeking to kill you!"

Jesus' answer.—Jesus was not alarmed. He knew that his Father had given him work to do; and until it was done Herod could do him no harm. So he replied, "Go, tell that fox, Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures to-day and to-morrow—and the third day (that is, in a short time) I shall complete my work." He would not give up till he had finished. When that should be God would make clear to him.

This was a bold answer to send a king—especially a petty king. For Herod was not really a king, but only a tetrarch, or governor, under the oversight of the Roman procurator. But the less his real power, the greater was Herod's pride and his jealousy of what he thought was his lawful authority.

Jesus withdraws for a time.—Nevertheless, Jesus soon withdrew from southern or lower Galilee. He was not afraid of Herod, as his answer shows. But the time had not yet come to declare himself as the Messiah. To do so before the proper time arrived would be fatal to the success of his work among the people. From the day of his baptism he had been following the guidance of his Father. When the time should come for him to make a public statement of his Messiahship, God would bring it about.

What faith, what patience, what real obedience this required in Jesus!

NEAR CÆSAREA PHILIPPI

Jesus now went up into the mountain foothills of northern Galilee. Here there were fewer towns than in the south and around the lake. There were fewer Jews and more Gentiles among the people—Greeks and Syrians, mostly. Heathen shrines and temples took the place of synagogues.

Across the border.—He crossed the border into the district around Cæsarea Philippi. This city, called "Philip's Cæsarea," was so named to distinguish it from the larger city of Cæsarea on the Mediterranean coast, south of Mount Carmel. It was a new city, built by Philip in honor of Augustus Cæsar, just as his brother Antipas had built a city on the Lake of Galilee and named it Tiberias in honor of the Emperor Tiberius.

But Jesus and his disciples did not go into Cæsarea. They remained in the little villages nearby. Even here people had heard of Jesus and welcomed him. But he did not intend to begin a new ministry here among the Gentiles. Instead he planned to spend most of his time with his disciples during the coming months of winter, teaching them privately and preparing to return. For he meant to return after a while—perhaps by spring—to Galilee; and then to go up to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover.

"Who do men say that I am?"—One day, as they were walking along the road, Jesus turned to his disciples and asked, "Who do the multitudes say that I am?"

They replied, "Some say you are John the Baptist, risen from the dead; some say you are Elijah—*you*, and not John, since John has been put to death; others say

that you are one of the old prophets come back to earth."

"But who do you say that I am?" he asked. Peter answered at once and said, "You are the Messiah!"

This was the first time that anyone had said to Jesus that he was the Messiah—since the day of his baptism, when he had heard the Voice from heaven. And although Peter meant that Jesus, as Messiah ("Christ"), was to become a king and reign in Jerusalem over the Jewish nation, still Jesus recognized his faith. "Blessed art thou," he said, "Simon, son of Jona; for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven."

The divine revelation.—At last the hour had come for which he had been waiting since his baptism and temptation. He had refused Satan's suggestion to declare himself to be the Messiah. His work was to prepare men for the Kingdom; and he had determined to wait, obediently and patiently, for his Father to make known to the world who he himself really was. And now God had revealed it to Peter. Jesus saw that the time was at hand when he should step forth publicly as the One sent by God for the salvation of His people.

JESUS THE MESSIAH

Perhaps the disciples had thought that Jesus was the Messiah, even before Peter confessed his faith. But they had not dared to say so. Peter was the first to express this belief. It took real faith to make such a confession. For at that very time Jesus was an exile outside the Holy Land, in a region of Gentiles and heathen—no one had ever yet dreamed that the Messiah might be outside the Holy Land.

Nevertheless, Jesus bade the disciples not to tell others that he was the Messiah. It was to be a secret. For if the people heard of it they would try, in their excitement, to start a revolution against the Romans and make Jesus their king. And Jesus was not to be a king; he was not that kind of a Messiah.

What kind of a Messiah was Jesus?—The Jews expected the Messiah to be a king, as we have already seen. He was to be a great ruler, like King David, described in the Old Testament (and so they called the Messiah "the Son of David"); he would probably be a warrior, like David, and conquer the enemies of Israel. Or he might be a prophet, some said, who would know all things; and, like Moses, he would guide the people through difficulty and trouble with his miracles and inspired words. Or he might perhaps be a priest, like the great Simeon the Righteous; he would purify the nation from its sin, and lead the people forever in perfect observance of the Law.

Still others thought that the Messiah was the "one like unto a son of man" whom Daniel had seen in his vision (Daniel 7: 13–14)—a heavenly, angelic being who should descend from the sky with his angels, raise the righteous dead from their graves, hold the judgment, punish the wicked, and reign over the kingdom of the risen righteous in a new world. There no death, nor sickness, nor pain, nor poverty, nor storms, nor anything evil or defiling should be permitted to exist.

But none of those who were so ardently looking forward to the Messiah's coming expected him to be a Teacher. No one thought he would go about from place to place with a band of disciples, preaching in the synagogues like a rabbi, talking to groups of men and women and children wherever they gathered about him.

Jesus the Teacher.—Yet that is the kind of a Messiah Jesus was. That is what he was led to become by the guidance of his Father, when he "returned in the Spirit" into Galilee after his baptism and temptation, and began his ministry among the people.

He was a Teacher. That is what the words mean, which are used so frequently in the gospels—rabbi, master, lord. And that is why he spent the greatest part of his time in teaching, first the multitudes, and then the Twelve.

And also that is one reason why he was rejected and crucified. People wanted a king, a warrior who could fight for them, or a prophet who could work miracles for them, or a priest who could offer sacrifices for their sins, or a heavenly Messiah seated on the clouds and surrounded by angels. They did not want one who should be first of all a teacher, one who came to tell them their faults and to help them to overcome them; to instruct them in the way of righteousness; to make them be honest with themselves and with God; to make them think clearly and act sincerely and love their unlovely neighbors. No; that seemed too humble—they wanted a Messiah who should be more grand and powerful.

But the Messiah whom God sent them began his work as a Teacher.

STUDY TOPICS

1. Where did Jesus go when he left Galilee? See Mark 8:27.
2. Tell how the Pharisees undertook to use the fact of John's death to get rid of Jesus. What did Jesus do in response to their scheme?
3. Where was Cæsarea Philippi? Who built the city? And in whose honor was it named?

4. What did the people think of Jesus, according to the words of the disciples given above in the lesson?
5. What kind of a Messiah did the disciples expect Jesus to become?
6. What kind of a Messiah was Jesus?

CHAPTER XXIV

ALONE WITH THE TWELVE

"And he began to teach that the Son of Man (the Messiah) must suffer many things—and he spake the saying openly."

THIS seemed the strangest of teachings! That the Messiah must suffer and die, and then rise again—just as the righteous were expected to rise again in order to enter the Kingdom of God!

"Peter objected and began to contradict him. But turning about, and seeing his disciples, he rebuked Peter with the words, 'Get thee behind me, Satan! Your mind is set on the things of men, not on the things of God.'

"And he called to him the multitude with his disciples, and said to them, 'If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. Whoever would save his life shall lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's shall save it. . . .

" 'For whoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this sinful generation, the Son of Man also shall be ashamed of him, when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.'

"And he said to them, 'I tell you truly, There are some of those that stand here who shall by no means taste of death till they see the Kingdom of God come with power.' "—Mark 8: 31—9: 1.

Is it not strange that the very same Peter who was blessed when he confessed his faith in Jesus' Messiah-

ship should now be rebuked for contradicting his Master? But Peter still supposed that Jesus was to be the kind of a Messiah the people expected—not the kind Jesus knew himself to be.

JESUS APPROACHING DEATH

Strange as the teaching was, that the Messiah must die and rise again; strange as it seemed to Peter that Jesus himself must suffer, the Master saw it clearly. He saw it in the "signs of the times," and he read it in the Bible.

"The signs of the times."—John, the Messenger of the Covenant, had been put to death. Herod Antipas, who had slain him, was reported to be "anxious to see" Jesus. The scribes and Pharisees had joined hands with the "Herodians" to put Jesus out of the way, either to cast him into prison or to procure his death. The people still flocked after Jesus, but they came expecting to see signs and wonders, to witness wonderful cures, rather than to repent of their sins and get ready to enter the Kingdom of God. There were some, the Zealots, who were disappointed in Jesus—they expected him to restore the kingdom to Israel, and set himself up as the king; and when Jesus refused to do this they were ready to turn against him.

It was clear to Jesus that a crisis was fast approaching. Either the scribes and Pharisees, Herod's courtiers and the disappointed Zealots, would succeed, or else the people as a whole would accept him as the Messiah when the hour came to make his public claim. One or the other would win—both could not.

He stood alone as the champion of outcast and poor, as the Teacher sent from God, against all the jealousy and hatred and intrigue of his opponents. And he knew

that very likely he would be put to death. But he was following his Father's guidance in all things. And if it was necessary for him to drink the cup of suffering he would not flinch; he knew that it was for the best, and that God could raise him again, even from death, to be His Messiah, in His Kingdom.

Light from the Bible.—And it was clear also from the Bible, that is, the Old Testament, that persecution and suffering had been the lot of God's messengers in the past. "No prophet is without honor, except in his own town," he had told his old friends at Nazareth, when they turned against him and threatened him with death. The sad truth now became apparent that prophets had almost always been put to death—such was their fate, though afterward men had built fine tombs over their graves. "It is impossible," he said to his disciples, "that a prophet should perish outside Jerusalem!"

And if the prophets sent by God had been put to death, was it likely that the Messiah—His last and greatest messenger, even His own Son—would be treated any better?

Then there were many passages in the Old Testament which referred to someone's suffering. People did not know whose suffering was referred to; but Jesus applied the words to himself. It was he himself, even though he was Messiah, who must lay down his life in that way.

There was the twenty-second Psalm, which began,

"My God, my God,
Why hast thou forsaken me?"

It describes one who was "a reproach of men and despised by the people"; all that saw him "laughed him to scorn" as he lay dying, his hands and feet pierced, and his "strength dried up like a potsherd."

The suffering Servant of the Lord.—There was also that chapter in Isaiah, chapter 53, which describes even more clearly the Servant of the Lord "despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." He was "led like a sheep to be slaughtered"; and yet in his suffering he "bore the griefs of others," and "carried their sorrows"; he was "wounded for their transgressions," the "chastisement of their peace was upon him."

The people wondered who it was who suffered in this way for the sins of others. Some thought the prophet was describing himself; others, that he referred to someone unknown, or even in a figurative way to the nation suffering in exile. But Jesus saw clearly that it meant the Messiah—not the king Messiah whom the people expected, but himself.

And he recognized that this also was the will of the Father. The way had been opening gradually before him since his baptism. When he was tempted by Satan to use his powers to preserve himself, to dazzle the multitudes with some great miracle in the temple, to seize the kingdoms of this world by military force, he had refused. For he left all in his Father's hands. The way now seemed to be leading him to suffering and death. But he believed that it was his Father's will, and his obedience was perfect and unquestioning. Wherever the way might lead him he would follow without faltering.

THE TRANSFIGURATION

This helps us to understand the meaning of the vision which Peter and James and John had soon after on the mountain top. They believed that Jesus was the Messiah, although they could not realize that the

Messiah must suffer and die. And his teaching that the Messiah must suffer and die was a stumbling-block to their faith.

On the mountain-top.—About a week after Peter's confession, one early spring morning, Jesus went up into a mountain to pray. He often did this, sometimes spending whole days and nights in prayer. He took with him his three closest friends and disciples, Peter and James and John. And while he was praying his countenance was altered and became bright and shining, and the glory of heaven shone forth in it. Even his garments seemed to grow white and to glisten. There appeared to him the two great prophets of the Old Testament, Moses the Lawgiver and Elijah. They also appeared in glory, and spoke with him about his approaching death in Jerusalem.

The Voice from the cloud.—Peter and the two other disciples shared the vision. Not knowing what to say, Peter exclaimed, "Master, it is good for us to be here. Let us make three tabernacles, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." But even while Peter spoke a cloud of mist surrounded them and they heard a voice saying, "This is my beloved Son, hear ye him." And when the voice was past the cloud disappeared and Jesus was there alone with them.

The meaning of the Transfiguration.—The disciples never forgot this experience. There, on the mountain top, with the mists forming and fading about them, and the spring sunshine pouring its flood of gold over the earth, they had seen Jesus in his glory! It was no longer a matter of faith alone—they had actually seen Jesus as the Messiah! Even though he might still have to suffer and die, they knew he was the Coming One. They would never forsake him now; they would

follow him, if need be, even unto death. The Voice from the cloud which they had heard, and the vision of Jesus in his glory, confirmed Peter's words of faith in him, "You are the Messiah, the Son of God."

Not only was Jesus ready to accept whatever course lay before him, in obedience to his Father's will; the disciples also were now ready to follow him to the very end.

STUDY TOPICS

1. Try to imagine how the disciples felt when Jesus told them that he was going to die. Bear in mind that they expected him to become a king and reign on "the throne of David" in Jerusalem.
2. What were the indications that a crisis was at hand in the career of Jesus and that his enemies would seek his death?
3. What light did the Bible throw on Jesus' future as the Messiah? Look up Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53.
4. Tell the story of the Transfiguration, and show its meaning for the disciples.
5. Commit to memory the sentence, in the passage from Isaiah referred to in this chapter, which impresses you most.

CHAPTER XXV

JOURNEYING TO JERUSALEM

As the Passover now drew near, Jesus set out with his disciples for Jerusalem. Every year, since he was a boy of twelve, he had gone up to Jerusalem for the great feast. But this time he knew that he was going there in the very gravest danger. Somehow, the authorities, the scribes and Pharisees, the Herodians and the Sadducean high priests, were sure to succeed in their efforts to put him to death. And yet he knew that even if death awaited him there, it was his Father's will for him to go.

The missionaries who went out to Asia and Africa fifty or a hundred years ago—men like Livingstone and Carey and Paton—knew that they "took their lives in their hands," and might very likely suffer death among those they went to serve. No—their lives were not "in *their* hands," but in the hands of God. He would care for them; and if they were killed, even their martyrdom might convince their murderers of the truth of the gospel. And so it was; the heroic death of the missionary proved to men that Christianity could at least make men brave enough to die for their faith. It has always been this way in the history of Christianity. "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church."

This helps us to understand why Jesus went to Jerusalem, knowing that he would probably be put to death. And did you ever think of this?—that no missionary would ever have gone out to teach the gospel if Jesus had not gone up to Jerusalem to die? We should never

have heard of Jesus, we should still be savages, living in bark houses, fighting some nearby tribe, wearing the skins of animals and worshiping evil spirits.

WHAT THE DISCIPLES THOUGHT

But even though Jesus told the disciples the great danger he faced in going to Jerusalem, they could not realize it. It seemed to them that he *must* be going up to Jerusalem to proclaim himself king and ascend his throne as Messiah. They pictured to themselves the splendor of his kingdom, how he should have an army of soldiers, and servants eager to wait on him, and angels coming down from heaven to obey his commands. They themselves, they thought, would sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel in the kingdom. Jesus would be king over all, and they would each be governing a tribe.

Who is greatest?—As they journeyed on, the disciples fell into a dispute over which should be greatest in this kingdom. When Jesus heard them he called to him a little child who was there, and said, "I tell you truly, except you turn and become as little children, you cannot even enter the Kingdom of God. Whoever humbles himself, and becomes like a little child, shall be greatest in the Kingdom." For the spirit of the disciples was entirely wrong. They were thinking only of themselves and the honors they were to receive. But Jesus was thinking of the service he could do for others. His kingdom was to be one in which men loved and served their fellows.

The request of James and John.—But even after this the disciples were not able to put out of their minds the honor and glory which they hoped to receive when the Kingdom was set up. One day James and John, the

sons of Zebedee, came to Jesus and said, "Master, will you do something for us? will you give us whatever we ask?" And Jesus replied, "What is it that you want me to do for you?" "Grant to us," they said, "that we may sit, one at your right hand and the other at your left, when you are king in Jerusalem."

Jesus replied, "You do not know what you are asking! Can you drink the cup that I shall drink? Can you be baptized with the baptism that I am to receive? —Can you endure what I am about to suffer?" "Yes, we are able," they replied. "Then," said Jesus, "the cup I drink you shall drink, and my baptism you shall share. But to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to give. It is for those for whom it has been prepared— God alone shall say who has the right to sit there."

Now when the other disciples heard it they were very indignant over this selfish request of the two brothers. But Jesus called them all to him and said,

> **"You know what it means to be 'great' among the Gentiles—their rulers lord it over them; they give commands and the people obey; they live in magnificence and luxury and the people are poor; yet they are called 'benefactors!' But that is not God's way. Nor shall it be that way among you. Whoever wishes to become great among you, let him be your servant; whoever would be first, let him become last and be the slave of all. For I tell you the truth, the Messiah himself has not come in order to be ministered unto, but to serve others, and to give his life a ransom for many."—Mark 10: 42-45; see Luke 22: 25-27.**

THE LAWYER'S QUESTION

They were now passing through Galilee once more, making their way toward the south. Once more the

people gathered about Jesus. For everywhere the roads were crowded with thousands of pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem for the Passover.

"Who is my neighbor?"—One day a lawyer—he must have been a scribe—came up to Jesus and said to him, "Master, you are teaching the people about the Kingdom of God. Tell me, what shall I do to enter the Kingdom and to inherit eternal life?" And Jesus replied, "You are a lawyer: What is written in the Law? What do you read there?" He answered by quoting the Law, " 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind and with all thy strength'; and 'thy neighbor as thyself.' " Then Jesus said, "You have answered correctly; do this and you shall live."

But the lawyer was anxious to "justify himself"—he wanted Jesus to decide whether or not he was good enough to enter God's Kingdom. And so he asked, "Who is my neighbor?" This question must have interested the disciples, for they had not long before been trying to get Jesus to decide what place they had in the Kingdom. And Jesus replied by telling the man a story.

The Good Samaritan.—

"A certain man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho; and he fell among robbers who stripped and beat him and departed, leaving him half-dead. And by chance a certain priest was going down that way, and when he saw the man he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him he was moved with compassion, and came to him, and bound up

his wounds, pouring in oil and wine. Then he set him upon his own beast and brought him to an inn and took care of him. And the next day, as he was leaving, he took out two pieces of money and gave them to the inn-keeper and said, 'Take care of him. And whatever more you spend, when I come back this way I will repay you.' "—Luke 10: 30-35.

Then Jesus asked the lawyer, "Which of these three do you think was a good neighbor to the man who fell among the thieves?" He replied, "He that showed mercy on him." "Then," said Jesus, "go and do likewise."

Whose neighbor am I?—Do you notice something about Jesus' answer? The man asked Jesus to say just who were his neighbors, whether Jews or Gentiles, whether rich or poor, whether people living next door or somewhere else. For the lawyer did not wish to waste his kindness. If there were any persons to whom God did not require him to be generous he wanted to know it.

Jesus did not answer by saying, "The man who was robbed and beaten is your neighbor." Instead, he asked, "Who was it that acted the part of a neighbor to *him?*" That makes all the difference in the world. If you merely wish to be good to others because the Law requires it, or because you wish to be well thought of, you will not be very good. God wants you to be good to others because they need your help, and because you love them as much as you do yourself.

"Who gives himself with his gift feeds three,
Himself, his hungering neighbor, and Me."

This lesson the disciples needed to learn just as much as the lawyer. I wonder if we also need to learn it?

STUDY TOPICS

1. What was the origin of the Passover? Why was it kept? See Chapter 4.
2. When missionaries laid down their lives has their sacrifice seemed fruitless? Was their work wasted? Jesus left no message written by himself. How then did he expect his gospel to be spread?
3. What was Jesus' answer to the question, "Who is greatest in the Kingdom?" Has this a present-day application?
4. Tell the story of the request of James and John.
5. Tell the story of the Good Samaritan, and show how it answered the lawyer's question.
6. When Jesus went up to Jerusalem, facing the death which his enemies were plotting against him, do you think he was like the Good Samaritan? Remember that in getting off his beast and ministering to the injured man, the Samaritan was running the risk of himself being robbed and beaten by the robbers. But he did not hesitate, for he was brave as well as loving.

CHAPTER XXVI

IN JUDÆA

As they journeyed on, Jesus sent out his disciples to the villages which he himself had not been able to visit. Here they laid their hands on the sick, just as Jesus did, and cast out the evil spirits and preached, saying that the Kingdom of God was nigh at hand. This was Jesus' final appeal to the people of Galilee, calling them to repent and prepare for the coming of the Kingdom.

Every day as the Passover drew nearer the crowds continued to increase. Great multitudes were now following Jesus and accompanying him to the Holy City, for the feast. They were glad to be in his company, for they had heard him teach and seen him heal, and they expected the Kingdom to be set up at once. Of course, they, like the twelve disciples, expected the Kingdom to be an earthly one. Jesus, they thought, was going to Jerusalem to be crowned as king!

FAREWELL TO GALILEE

Some of the villages which the disciples visited welcomed them. Others refused to receive them or their message. It was just as it had been all along in Jesus' ministry. There were those who heard and heeded the message; others turned away.

Jesus rejected.—As they were leaving Galilee Jesus thought about his work there; how he had healed the sick; how he had taught the people in the synagogues;

how only a few had responded to his teaching, while most of the people had rejected his message. And he said,

> **"Woe to thee, Chorazin! Woe to thee, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes! They shall be far better off in the day of judgment than you!**
>
> **"And thou, Capernaum—shalt thou be exalted to heaven? Thou shalt be brought down to destruction!"—Luke 10: 13-15.**

Jesus' disappointment.—The cities of Galilee had had their day of opportunity, and they had let it slip by. They were full of people, happy and sad, rich and poor, the honored and the despised. The greatest thing in the world, which they lacked, was repentance and righteousness: they needed to accept Jesus' teaching and follow it in their lives. But their business came first and their pleasures. And they were afraid to disagree with the scribes and Pharisees. They might have become the greatest cities in the world. To-day they do not even exist: only scattered stones mark the places where once they stood.

Jesus had expected greater things of them; his rejection was a heartbreaking disappointment.

AT JERICHO

Leaving Galilee, they followed the road down along the Jordan; near Jericho it turned westward, and they began the ascent to Jerusalem.

Bartimæus.—Just outside the city of Jericho a beggar sat beside the road. He was blind, and his name was Bartimæus. He had heard of Jesus and of his

power to heal; and he had for a long while been hoping that some day Jesus would pass this way and heal him too.

As he now heard the multitude passing by, he inquired what it meant. They told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by. Immediately he sprang up and rushed out into the road, crying, "Jesus, Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" Some in the crowd told him to be quiet, but he cried out more than ever, "Have mercy on me!"

Jesus heard him and told the disciples to bring the man before him. When he came, he asked, "What do you wish me to do for you?" Bartimæus replied, "Lord, that I may receive my sight!" Then Jesus said to him, "Your faith has saved you; receive your sight." Immediately the blindness left him, he received his sight, and followed Jesus. And the people, when they saw what had taken place, praised God. And so they passed on, glorifying God for what Jesus had done.

Zacchæus.—In Jericho there lived a man named Zacchæus. He was the chief tax-gatherer, or publican, and he was very rich. For there were great palm groves north of the city, and the taxes which Zacchæus collected were large in amount. He had heard that Jesus was coming and he was very anxious to see him. As he was short in stature, he climbed into a sycamore tree, hoping there to catch just a glimpse of Jesus.

When Jesus and his crowd of followers came near, the Master looked up and saw Zacchæus sitting in the tree, and called out to him to come down. For he wished to stay that night at his house.

Hearing this, Zacchæus jumped down and ran to Jesus. He had never expected this high honor, actually to entertain the great teacher in his own home! It

seemed to him that he must explain—perhaps Jesus did not realize that he was a publican; if he knew, perhaps he would not wish to stay with him. The crowd standing by saved him this trouble, for they asked, "Is he going to be the guest of a sinner?"

Zacchæus did not deny that he was a sinner. His conscience told him he had more than once defrauded the taxpayers of Jericho. And Jesus surely knew that he was a sinner, not that he looked upon him as "defiled" and "unclean," as the Pharisees said (because he did business with the Gentiles), but because he had been mean and unfair, and cheated, and took advantage of people in order to make more money. Nevertheless, Jesus was willing to become his guest, and spend the night at his house! Any Pharisee would have scorned the invitation of such a man as Zacchæus; but Jesus, far differently, was honoring him with the promise to come before Zacchæus even asked him!

The rich publican was touched at the heart. And so, as he stood before Jesus, he said, "Master, behold, half of my goods I shall give to the poor; and whatever I have taken wrongfully from others I shall restore fourfold!" Jesus replied, "To-day has salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham." So Jesus went home with Zacchæus and was his guest.

THE PARABLE OF THE TALENTS

It is very easy to judge people by what they seem to be. Good, pious people in Jesus' time—like many of the Pharisees—looked down upon the "sinners"; almost everyone despised the "publicans"; and to call anyone a "Gentile" was the most offensive name one could use. When Jesus went to Zacchæus' house, many persons were utterly shocked and scandalized.

But Jesus knew that what a person really is, in God's sight, is often very different from what he appears to be in the eyes of others. That is why he said, "Judge not, that you may not be judged." As one of the ancient prophets had taught, "Man looks on the outward appearance, but God looks on the heart."

Real religion.—What makes a man pleasing to God is not his outward appearance of goodness, his prayers in the synagogue, or his fasting twice a week. What matters is his real religion, down in his heart, and what he does when no one is watching him.

Possessing great advantages in the world does not mean that a person is therefore going to be saved. People thought that being a Jew, "a child of Abraham," was enough to entitle anyone to enter the Kingdom of God. But Jesus taught that this was a great mistake. It is not the possession of advantages, it is the use we make of them that matters in the sight of God.

The Three Servants.—Jesus made this clear by another story—perhaps he told it to the people that day in Jericho when they saw him go to the house of Zacchæus:

> **"A certain man, going into another country, called his servants, and gave them charge of his property. To one he intrusted five talents** (about $5,000), **to another two, to another one, according to their ability. Then he went on his journey.**
>
> **"Straightway the man who received five talents went and traded with them and made five more. So did he who received two talents; he doubled his capital. But the servant who received one talent went and dug a hole in the ground and hid his lord's money.**

"After a long time the master of those servants returned and called for an account of his money. He who received the five talents came and brought five other talents, saying, 'Sir, you delivered to me five talents; I have gained five talents more.' The master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things—I will set you over many. Enter into the joy of your lord!'

"He also who received the two talents came and said, 'Sir, you intrusted me with two talents; I have gained two others.' The master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things—I will set you over many. Enter into the joy of your lord.'

"Then he who received the one talent came and said, 'Sir, I knew that you are a hard man to deal with; you reap where you have not sowed, and gather where you have not scattered. I was afraid, therefore, and went and hid your talent in the earth. Here it is.'

"But the master answered, 'You wicked and slothful servant! You knew that I reap where I have not sowed, and gather where I have not scattered. You should therefore have given my money to the bankers; then at my coming I should at least have received back my own with interest! . . . Take away the talent from him and give it to the one with ten talents.' "—Matthew 25: 14-28.

It is not the possession but the use we make of our talents, our gifts, our privileges—whatever they are—that makes us pleasing to our Father in heaven. The publican Zacchæus, now that he had repented and was trying to do the will of God, was a better man than the proudest Pharisee in Jericho, who looked down on him.

STUDY TOPICS

1. Did many people go to the Passover each year in Jerusalem?
2. What did the disciples expect Jesus to do when he reached Jerusalem?
3. Why was Jesus sad as he left Galilee?
4. Tell the story of Bartimæus.
5. Who was Zacchæus? Tell the story. Was he a good or a bad man? Why did the Pharisees look down on him?
6. How did the Parable of the Talents show what God expects of people who possess advantages over their neighbors?
7. God "expects much from the one to whom much is given." Some of the advantages people enjoy, as gifts from Him, are education, money, good homes, citizenship, special talents like musical ability or mechanical skill, and so on. Show how these ought to be used for God.

CHAPTER XXVII

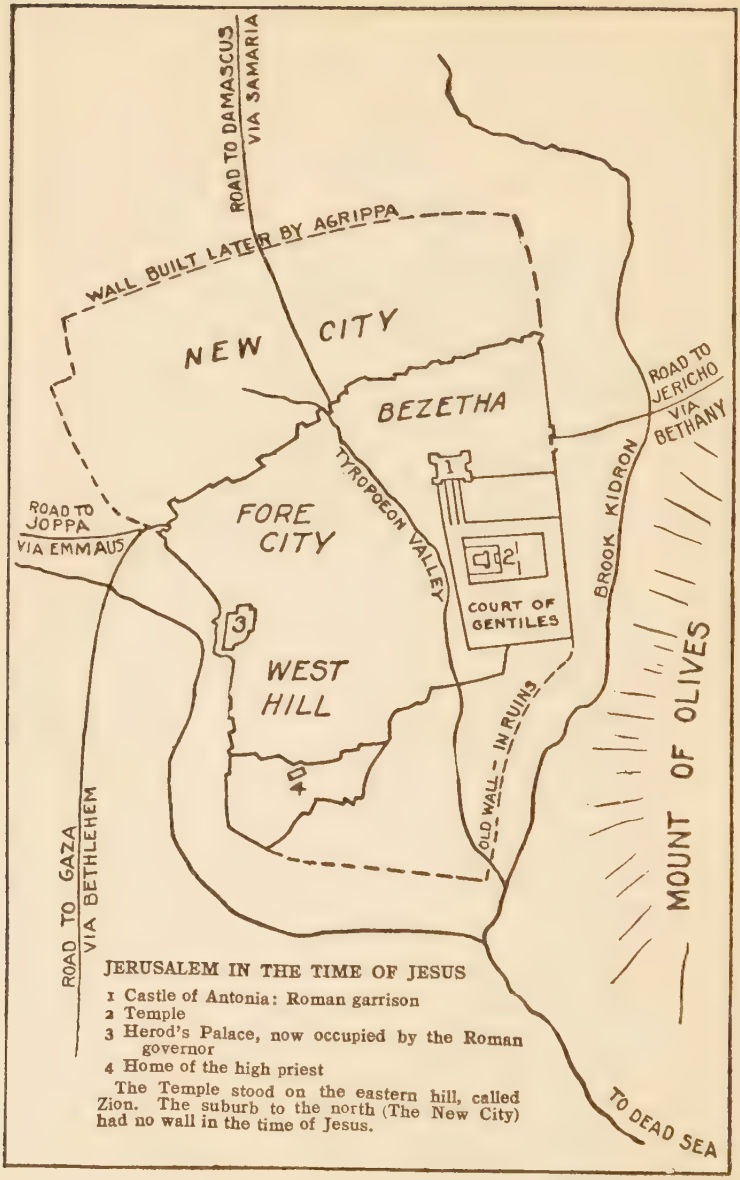
ENTERING JERUSALEM

It was spring once more, and toward the end of March. The days were growing longer, for the sun now rose earlier in the morning and set later in the evening. The hills were turning green again, even in rocky Judæa. The air was fresh and sweet, and along the roadside the birds were building their nests in the trees and bushes.

The days were warm, but the nights were still raw and chill. A glorious paschal moon lighted up the darkness; night by night it grew more full and round. The Passover would be kept the day after the full moon appeared. Out on the meadows, outside the city of Jericho, the Passover pilgrims camped for the night. Their tents, gay with color in the daytime, looked brown and gray in the moonlight. To-morrow night they would be camping outside the walls of Jerusalem. But none of those happy people, who had followed Jesus up from Galilee to keep the Passover, dreamed of what would take place before the Passover arrived.

THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY

Jesus knew what might happen, but he had no intention of swerving from his course. It was his plan to set forth once and for all, before the assembled nation at the Passover, his teaching regarding the Kingdom of God, and likewise his own Messiahship. At last the time had come to tell his secret. The Messiah, whose coming John the Baptist had announced and whom



JERUSALEM IN THE TIME OF JESUS

1 Castle of Antonia: Roman garrison
2 Temple
3 Herod's Palace, now occupied by the Roman governor
4 Home of the high priest

The Temple stood on the eastern hill, called Zion. The suburb to the north (The New City) had no wall in the time of Jesus.

everyone was now expecting, was here! Jesus himself was the Messiah.

The ancient prophecy.—There was an old prophecy (see Zechariah 9) which said that the Messiah was to come as a king, but in a very humble guise. Instead of being carried at the head of an army of soldiers, he was to enter Jerusalem riding on an ass—just like any ordinary traveler.

People knew of this prophecy because it was in the Bible. They did not pay much attention to it, however, for their idea of the Messiah was so entirely different from that. But Jesus, in telling his secret and setting forth before the whole Jewish people the fact that he himself was the Messiah, chose to do so symbolically. That is, he would not make the claim in just so many words and say, "I am the Messiah." For "Messiah" still meant to the people a great warrior-king. Instead, he would act the part of the lowly king in the prophecy and let the people draw their own conclusion as to what it meant.

Riding an ass.—The next morning they set out from Jericho for Jerusalem. It was only fifteen miles or so and took but four or five hours. At last they reached Bethany, near the Mount of Olives. Just west of them, beyond the hill, lay the city of Jerusalem. Jesus now sent two of his disciples into Bethany to bring an ass for him to ride. They soon found an animal and led it to Jesus. Spreading garments on its back, they helped Jesus to mount it. Then the disciples and the crowd of other pilgrims spread more garments in the road and cut down branches from palm trees, likewise scattering them before him. This was just what was always done in honor of a king when he entered a city in triumph And the multitudes going before and following after

shouted, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!"

So, singing and shouting and waving palms, they crossed the hill by the road just north of the Mount of Olives, where they could see in plain view the city lying before them. Then down the hill and across the Kidron valley they went and up to the gates of the city.

The objection of the Pharisees.—Certain Pharisees joined the crowd to see what was taking place. They understood at once, and thought the shouts and cries of the multitude were mistaken. If Jesus knew they were actually calling him the Messiah he would surely command them to stop! So they said to Jesus, "Do you hear what your disciples are saying? Rebuke them!" But he answered, "I tell you, if they should hold their peace, the stones would cry out!"

IN THE TEMPLE

Through the great northeast gate of the city they passed, Jesus still riding and the crowd still crying "Hosanna." He now dismounted. Accompanied by his disciples and the crowd, he went up the hill of Zion to the temple (see the diagram).

The traders in the temple.—Here, in the outer court, the wide "Court of the Gentiles," were booths where doves were sold for sacrifice. There were also tables, where sat money-changers ready to exchange sacred temple coins for the Roman currency used by the people.

The traders were busy, and their business was lucrative. It was sacrilege to buy or sell in the temple, of course; but the traders paid well for their "concession," and the easy-going Sadducees (the high priests) were

willing to overlook the sacrilege. It must have shocked the feelings of people who came long distances to worship in the temple to see such desecration of the holy place. Jesus determined to put an end to it.

Jesus drives them out.—He first seized a scourge of knotted ropes, and drove out the traders. Then he overthrew the tables of the money-changers and spilled their coins on the ground. Sternly he commanded, "Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a market-place! It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations'; but you have made it a den of thieves!"

The priests angry at Jesus.—The traders fled. The people applauded and gathered about Jesus. But the chief priests and the scribes were angry over the disturbance which he had caused. They were now more determined than ever that Jesus must be put to death. He was leading the people away from them, and now he had even interfered with their management of affairs in the temple. Unless he were stopped he would soon put an end to their power and influence. The wealth and the privileges which they enjoyed would be taken away. And so, because they were bad men pretending to be good, because they were selfish men jealous of their position and their privileges, they hated Jesus and shut their eyes to the truth.

The plot against Jesus.—And so the plot was formed to get Jesus into their hands somehow or other, by fair means or foul, try him, have Pilate condemn him and put him to death. Only they must act quickly. There was no time to be lost. If they waited until the feast the city would be full of people; the Galileans would all be here; they were his admirers and followers, and there would be a tumult. So in the next few days,

and as speedily as possible, they must take him and put him to death.

But Jesus did not remain in the city overnight. That evening he went out to Bethany and stayed at the home of a friend.

STUDY TOPICS

1. At what time of the year was the Passover held? Why was it held in Jerusalem?
2. Look up Zechariah 9:9. Why did Jesus choose to enter Jerusalem in the way he did?
3. Try to form a mental picture of the "triumphal entry." Tell the story as vividly as you can. What does "Hosanna" mean?
4. How did the sacrilege of buying and selling in the temple court come to be allowed by the high priests?
5. Explain the plot of Jesus' enemies against him.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE PLOT AGAINST JESUS

EACH day, from now on, Jesus spent in the temple; each night he remained outside the city, in Bethany or on the Mount of Olives.

The scribes and high priests now took their first step in carrying out the plot against him. They tried to "trap him in his talk."

ENSNARING QUESTIONS

As he taught the people in the temple courts they came to him with their questions. They pretended simply to be seeking for information. In truth, they were determined, if possible, to make him condemn himself by some careless answer.

"By what authority?"—Their first question was asked the day after Jesus drove the traders out of the temple. They came up to him as he was teaching and asked, "Tell us, by what authority are you doing these things?" That seemed to them a question which Jesus could not answer; and if he thus admitted that he had no authority the people would see at once that he was deceiving them.

But they were mistaken. It was not so easy to catch Jesus in their trap. At once he answered, "I will also ask you a question. Tell me this: Was John's baptism from heaven, or from men? Did he have authority to baptize, or not?"

They paused to reason among themselves over this

question and said, "If we reply, 'From heaven,' he will say, 'Why didn't you believe him then?' But if we say, 'From men,'—all the people will stone us, for they are persuaded that John was a prophet." So they answered him that they could not tell whether John's baptism was from heaven or not.

Then said Jesus to them, "Neither do I tell you by what authority I do these things."

Tribute to Cæsar.—They saw that it was no use trying to catch him in this way. Jesus was too clever for them. They thought he would be an ignorant country carpenter; and, like many proud persons who look down on others, they were woefully mistaken! Instead, he was more shrewd and quick than the smartest lawyer among them.

Their next step was to send out spies—men who pretended to ask Jesus questions just for the sake of learning the truth. They said to him, "Master, we know that you are a true teacher. You do not accept the opinion of others, but teach the way of God in truth. Tell us, is it lawful or not to pay the tribute to Cæsar? For some say, 'Tribute should be given to God only and not to a heathen emperor.' "

Jesus saw their hypocrisy at once. "Show me a penny—whose image and superscription is on it?" They handed him a denarius (worth twenty cents), and on it were stamped the head and name of the emperor. And so they replied, "Cæsar's image and superscription." Jesus then answered them and said, "Render to Cæsar the things that belong to Cæsar; and to God the things that are God's."

Failure of this scheme.—They expected that Jesus would say, "It is wrong to pay tribute to Rome"—and so they could accuse him before Pilate at once. But

his answer completely silenced them. There was nothing more to be said.

It was quite evident that asking questions was not going to lead him into their hands. Something more must be done than this. And what they did must be done at once—every hour was bringing fresh bands of pilgrims to the city. Soon it would be too late; they would not dare to seize him during the feast. Nevertheless, they hardly knew what to do—for they dared not take him openly. The people already in Jerusalem would cause a riot. Their plot really looked as if it would fail.

JUDAS' TREACHERY

And then came the offer of Judas! Just as the plotters were at their wits' end, provoked to fury by Jesus' cleverness in avoiding their traps, came the offer of one of his own disciples to betray him into their hands. This seemed to them the greatest piece of luck in the world!

The career of Judas.—Judas had been one of the trusted, intimate disciples of Jesus. He was not so close to our Lord as Peter or James or John, but he was given a responsible position as treasurer of the band. He bought their food, and gave alms to the poor from the common fund. He is called Iscariot, and some persons think this means that he was a native of Kerioth, a village in Judæa. If so, he was the only Judæan among the Twelve. All the others were Galileans.

His plans.—But Judas, though Jesus trusted him, was not worthy to be a disciple. He had followed Jesus from the first in the expectation that the Kingdom of God would be an earthly kingdom. So the other disciples thought also, as we have seen. But the

others had no such plans and schemes as Judas had. He intended to be the treasurer, not only for Jesus and the Twelve, but of the Kingdom of David, when Jesus had restored it and was reigning in Jerusalem on his throne. Immense wealth would come into his hands for safe keeping. He would be Chancellor of the Exchequer, Secretary of the Treasury, in this new kingdom.

His disappointment.—But now it seemed that Jesus had no intention of making himself a king; he simply refused to take advantage of the great opportunity that was his to start a revolution against Rome and set up his kingdom at once. Here were followers by the thousands, ready to do his bidding instantly, seize the sword and set up a free Israel; yet Jesus did nothing but teach. Judas began to realize that he had made a mistake.

He had staked his whole future upon the success of Jesus' kingdom. Now he saw the dream fading before his eyes—there was to be no kingdom in Jerusalem, no palace, no throne, no army, no treasury! Worse yet, Jesus himself seemed to be expecting failure; he talked about being put to death on the cross, cast out by the scribes and elders and priests at Jerusalem. Judas had no heart for such a collapse of his ambitions.

His temptation.—He knew that the high priests and scribes were trying to get Jesus into their hands. This was his opportunity.

His life seemed a failure so far. He had staked everything upon the Kingdom. And he saw the Kingdom—as he had dreamed about it—vanishing away.

But suppose he were to tell the high priests something about Jesus?—something that they were very anxious to know—something which would enable them to bring a charge against him? Perhaps they would pay him well or confer some honor upon him. Thus he

would save at least something from the wreck of his career.

Of course, Jesus had loved and trusted him. For months Judas had lived in his presence, day in, day out. And to tell this secret which the high priests wanted to know would be treachery to his Master. So Judas' conscience told him. But yet—somehow or other, the priests were sure to get hold of Jesus, since the Master expected to die. And he might as well be the one to profit by the transaction. In this way the temptation came to him.

"Yes," he said to himself at last, "I will do it."

His agreement with the priests.—So he went to the priests and said, "What are you willing to give me, if I deliver him unto you?" A bargain was quickly made. The priests and scribes were prepared to pay a large amount to make sure of Jesus' arrest, providing it could be made quickly and without the knowledge of the people. So they weighed out thirty pieces of silver.[1] In return, Judas told the secret and promised to turn over Jesus to them.

The secret was this: Jesus looked upon himself as the Messiah, the Son of God. The priests might have guessed that this was what Jesus thought from the manner of his entry into Jerusalem. But Jesus had not said in so many words, "I am the Messiah." And they supposed that the shouts and cries of the Galileans had been merely an outburst of momentary enthusiasm, without any great importance. But if Jesus really claimed that he himself was the coming Messiah, then they already had him in their power! For they could make this the charge against him and secure his con-

[1] Thirty shekels is only $22.50 in our money; but this amount was at that time the equivalent of a laborer's wages for four months, and was therefore worth many times its value to-day.

demnation. And since Judas was a member of the Twelve, he could easily tell them where Jesus was at any time of the day or night—they could now arrest him quietly, without any danger of a riot.

From that time on Judas sought a convenient opportunity for delivering Jesus over to the priests. He had sold his Master for thirty pieces of silver; and into the bargain he had sold himself, his honor, his conscience, his very soul! The world still looks upon him as the most cowardly traitor who ever lived, and his name is a byword for treachery.

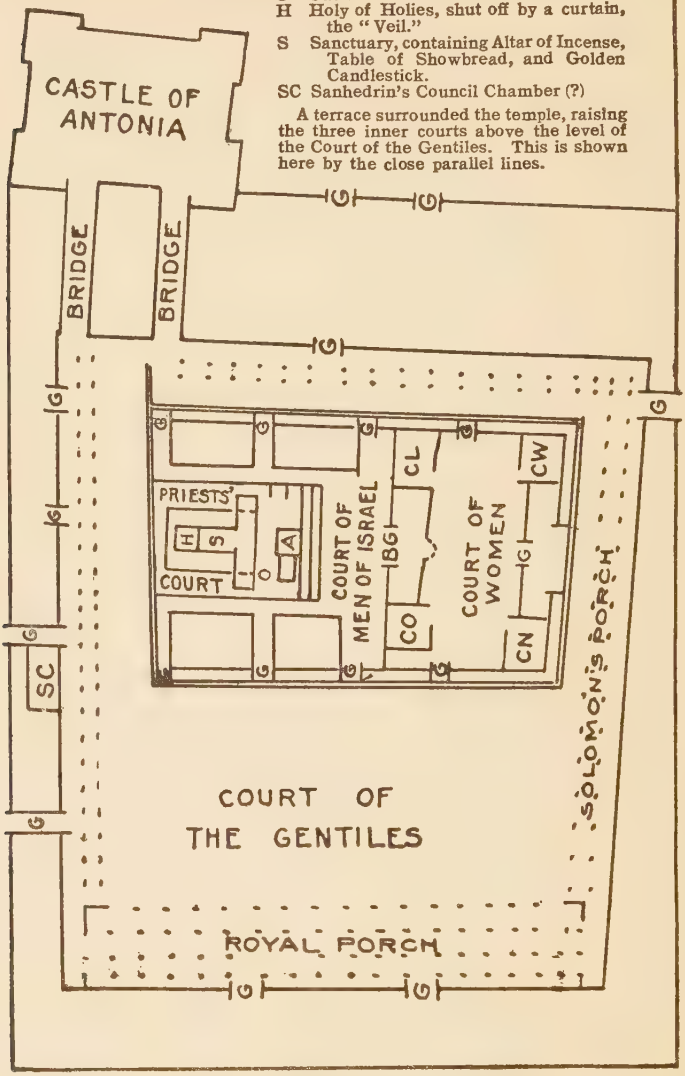
STUDY TOPICS

1. Where did Jesus stay each night from now on? Why? But where was he in the daytime?
2. What was the first question of the scribes and priests, after Jesus drove out the traders? Give Jesus' answer.
3. Why was Jesus asked to decide whether tribute should be paid to the Roman government? How did he decide the question?
4. Describe the result of the scribes' effort to "ensnare Jesus in his words."
5. Describe the character and career of Judas as given in this chapter. Why was he tempted to betray his Master?
6. How did Judas agree to betray Jesus? What was the secret he told the high priests?
7. How much money did Judas receive for his treachery? What did he do when he realized that he was a traitor? See Matthew 27:3-5.

THE TEMPLE IN THE TIME OF JESUS

A Altar
BG Beautiful Gate
CL Chamber of Lepers
CN Chamber of Nazirites
CO Chamber of Oil
CW Chamber of Wood
G Gates
H Holy of Holies, shut off by a curtain, the "Veil."
S Sanctuary, containing Altar of Incense, Table of Showbread, and Golden Candlestick.
SC Sanhedrin's Council Chamber (?)

A terrace surrounded the temple, raising the three inner courts above the level of the Court of the Gentiles. This is shown here by the close parallel lines.



CHAPTER XXIX

THE LAST DAYS IN JERUSALEM

Jesus came into the city early each day when the morning sacrifice was offered. Throngs of people filled the courts of the temple. After the service they remained to listen to Jesus.

JESUS TEACHING IN THE TEMPLE

They were eager to hear him and welcomed his message. The people were sincere and humble, and gave freely of their wealth to support the temple and the priests. They believed that the scribes were their appointed teachers, even while the scribes made religion too hard for any but themselves to practice it.

Warning against the scribes.—The greatest fault of the nation, Jesus saw, was the pride and arrogance of the scribes and the selfishness and avarice of the priests. They had refused to listen to him, just as they had refused to hear John the Baptist. They had prevented the people from accepting the gospel; and so his call to repent and make ready for the Kingdom of God had not been heeded. A terrible judgment was sure to fall upon the nation, more terrible than any in the past. The city of Jerusalem, sooner or later, would be destroyed, and with it the beautiful temple and its buildings. For the scribes were stifling the very souls of men. If their oppression continued the nation would surely be destroyed.

Jesus solemnly warned his hearers against these false teachers.

"Beware of the scribes, who love to walk in long robes, and to be saluted in the market-places, and to sit in the chief seats in the synagogues! They devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. They bind upon men's shoulders burdens hard to bear, but will not lift a finger to lighten them.

"The outside of the cup and platter they carefully cleanse, while the inside remains unclean, full of extortion and excess.

"They compass sea and land to make one proselyte; but when they have got him they make him two-fold more the child of Gehenna than themselves.

"They shut men out of the Kingdom of God; they refuse to enter, themselves, and prevent others from entering."—See Matthew 23.

The widow's mites.—As he sat there teaching, opposite the temple treasury, he saw certain rich men offering their gifts. There were trumpet-shaped tubes into which the money was dropped, and it slid down into the chests within the temple.

A poor widow came up and dropped in two mites—less than a cent of our money—which was all that she had. Seeing this, Jesus said to his disciples, "I tell you, this poor widow has cast in more than all the others. For they, out of their wealth, gave only what they do not need; while she has given all she had, even her whole living."

On the Mount of Olives.—Towards evening Jesus and his disciples went out to the Mount of Olives, where they spent the night.

As they were walking along the disciples pointed out the magnificence of the temple and the other buildings, the arcades about the courts, the walls and stairways, and the Castle of Antonia. There were no buildings like these in Galilee—not even in the forbidden city of

Tiberias. So they said, "Master, see what wonderful stone-work, and what beautiful buildings these are!" But he only replied, "Not one of these stones shall be left upon another: every one of these buildings shall be destroyed."

Jesus' heart was neavy with sorrow for his people; terrible as was their fate, they were surely bringing it upon themselves. When Jesus and his disciples reached the Mount of Olives they looked back over the city, with its glorious temple shining in the setting sun. All this was to be destroyed!

Jesus weeping over Jerusalem.—He himself was to die. He now knew this to be certain. For the authorities had not only rejected his teaching, they had met him with scorn and hatred when he came to Jerusalem to present himself as the Messiah—for he was a different Messiah than they expected, a better Messiah than anyone had ever dreamed about. And now they were plotting his death.

But it was not for himself that he was sorrowful. It was for his country, for Jerusalem, the city of God, for his Father's house, and the people whom he loved and whom he yearned to save, but who had refused to hear him. His own death was to be the final weight in the balance which would bring down the judgment of destruction upon an unrepentant nation. "All the righteous blood shed from the foundation of the world, from the blood of Abel" to his own, was to be "required of this generation." If only they had accepted him and hearkened to his teaching! Instead, they were destroying themselves.

As he looked out over the city, and thought of all that was then taking place and was still to take place after his death, he wept.

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them that are sent unto thee! How oft would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and you would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.—If you had but known, in this your day, the things that belong unto peace! But now they are hid from your eyes."—Luke 13:34-35; 19:42.

IN THE UPPER ROOM

It was now the day before the Passover. The disciples wished to know where Jesus would keep the feast. They needed a room where they could gather and eat the supper which all Jews kept as a memorial of the Deliverance from Egypt. A lamb must be bought and arrangements made for roasting it. Unleavened bread and bitter herbs and wine must be purchased at one of the shops.

So they came to Jesus and asked him where they should make ready. He directed them to the house of a friend in Jerusalem who had an upper room which he would let them use. Then Peter and John went into the city and made ready.

And here, since the Passover *began* that evening, Jesus and the Twelve gathered to eat their supper and observe the feast.

At the supper.—As they sat down Jesus said to them, "I have greatly desired to eat the Passover with you before I suffer. For I say unto you, I will never eat it again until I eat it with you in the Kingdom of God."

Jesus' thoughts were still on the future. He knew that the hour was at hand when he should be seized and put to death. "The Son of Man goes," he said, "as it is

written of him: but woe to the one by whom the Son of Man is betrayed!"

These words gave a shock to the disciples—most of all to Judas: for he had not the slightest idea that Jesus knew of his treachery. They began to ask Jesus who it was who should betray him, saying, one by one, "Is it I?" And he replied, "It is one of the Twelve, lying here at the table with me."

Confused and embarrassed, Judas got up and went out. Then Peter said, "Master, I will never desert you. I am ready to go to prison and to death with you if necessary." But Jesus replied, "Peter, Satan is going to sift you like wheat. Before the cock crows, tomorrow morning, you will deny that you ever knew me! You will all desert me, just as it is said, 'I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered abroad.' The prophecy is about to be fulfilled, 'He was reckoned with the transgressors.' "

But Peter replied, "Though everyone else deserts you, I will not."

Why Jesus was to die.—The disciples could not understand why Jesus was so sad, and why he kept referring to the prophecies, which he said were about to be fulfilled. Even though Judas was plotting to betray him, what real harm could Judas do? There was still plenty of time to get away and start for home. They had their swords.[1] Eleven men armed with swords could easily get out of Jerusalem. It was light enough in the streets to see, with the bright moon shining; and the priests would hardly dare to attack them and so rouse the Roman garrison.

But Jesus would not listen to such a plan. He re-

[1]These were the long knives used by farmers and fishermen.

fused to flee like a coward. If it was necessary for him to die, he would die bravely for the truth. His life was still in God's hands, just as it had always been. And if it was the will of his Father that he should now lay down his life—and the prophecies in the Bible seemed to make this clear—then he was fully prepared to lay it down. He had never set his own safety above the will of God. He "pleased not himself."

If now he must really die, his death would surely be for the salvation of his people. For God can use a man's death as well as his life in working out His high purposes.

There was something mysterious about the death of the Messiah. The Suffering Servant of the Lord, in the prophecy of Isaiah, had to lay down his life in order to take away the sins of men.

All afternoon, the Passover sacrifices had been offered in the temple for the sins of the people. So, too, must he now offer himself as a sacrifice for their sins. Even while they rejected and crucified him he would be bearing their sins and making atonement for them.

The disciples could not understand this. They vaguely felt that somehow things must turn out differently than Jesus expected. They still clung to the idea of a kingdom which should be set up in Jerusalem, an earthly kingdom, with Jesus as king. Why, then, should he be thinking of death if his kingdom was about to be established? Dying was the very last thing in the world they expected of their Messiah.

The Breaking of the Bread.—

"And as they were eating, he took a loaf of bread; and when he had blessed it, he broke it and gave it to them and said, 'Take this. It is my body, which is broken for you.' And he took a cup of wine; and

when he had given thanks, he gave it to them and said, 'Drink of it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is shed for you and for many for the remission of sins.' "—Mark 14: 22-24; Luke 22: 19-20; Matthew 26: 26–28.

It was clear to them at last. Jesus' mind was fully made up; it was useless to try to dissuade him. He was to die, and in some mysterious way his death was to be "for the remission of sins."

By giving them this bread and wine he had bound them together, and to himself, in a solemn covenant. They were compelled now to go with him wherever he went. They had not chosen him, but he had chosen them; and they were sharers, by this bond, in his very life, his body and his blood.

It was clear to them now that whatever took place Jesus knew perfectly well what he was doing. If he died it was not because he could not help himself, but because of his own free will he was laying down his life for others. For a long time they had expected that Jesus would become a king—their kind of a king. And a king he was now, indeed, their ruler and lord. They had never so fully realized his power before, or seen such majesty as this. For he had the supremest power in the world—not only to command others, but to lay down his own life for their good.

A great silence fell over them. They were now sharers in a solemn sacrament, they were bound together in a sacred covenant; and they were bound to obey Jesus now no matter what he commanded them to do. They were pledged to him for life or death. They had given allegiance to their king.

After a little they sang a hymn and went out to the Mount of Olives.

STUDY TOPICS

1. Do you think the people who heard Jesus teaching in the temple suspected that the priests were plotting against him? If they had, what do you think they would have done? This explains why the priests were in a great hurry and why they kept their plot a secret.
2. What was the great fault of the scribes and Pharisees? Of the nation?
3. What did Jesus foresee as the fate of the city of Jerusalem? Give Jesus' words as he wept over the city.
4. Tell the story of the Widow's Mites, and give Jesus' words on the occasion.
5. Where did Jesus eat the Passover supper with his disciples?
6. Tell the story of the Last Supper, stating what Jesus did and giving his own words as far as possible. Who were present? Give their names from memory. What is a covenant?
7. What were the disciples to do, now that they understood that Jesus was to die instead of ascending a throne and becoming king in Jerusalem?

CHAPTER XXX

JESUS IN THE HANDS OF THE PRIESTS

Crossing the little valley of the Kidron, Jesus and the eleven faithful disciples went up the Mount of Olives. There was a garden on the hillside called Gethsemane. Into this they entered.

IN GETHSEMANE

Leaving the others near the entrance, Jesus took with him Peter and James and John and went farther into the garden. Peter and the two brothers began to be amazed; they could not realize where Jesus was taking them at this hour. "My soul is exceeding sorrowful," he said, "even unto death. Stay here and watch."

Jesus' agony of prayer.— Going forward a little way, about a stone's throw, Jesus fell down upon his knees and prayed. And in his agony great drops of sweat rolled down like blood from his face.

Such was the anguish of his soul as he faced death. He had done no wrong; yet he was about to suffer the most horrible of deaths. He had given his whole life to serve and to save his people because he loved them. And this was the end—to be rejected and crucified. For he knew full well what the priests and elders would do with him once they had him in their power. "Father," he cried, "all things are possible with Thee. If Thou be willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will but Thine be done."

The sleeping disciples.—After a while he rose and came back to the disciples. They were sleeping, for

their "eyes were heavy." He roused them, and bade them pray. "Watch and pray, that you enter not into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." Ashamed of themselves, they determined to remain awake now and watch, even as he had told them.

Jesus went back and prayed once more. "O my Father, if this cannot pass away, except I drink it, Thy will be done." Again he came back, and again, as the long hours dragged by, and found them, even for the second and third times, sleeping. But instead of rebuking them further, he said simply, "Arise, let us be going: behold, the betrayer is at hand."

The arrest.—It was about midnight. The moon which had risen full that evening was now high overhead. The cool stillness of the garden was undisturbed. Jesus' own agony of soul was past. He had met temptation, he had conquered it. There had come to him strength from heaven to endure his sufferings. All was calm and peaceful in that lovely olive grove, and beneath them lay the sleeping city, serene and beautiful in the moonlight.

Suddenly, through the stillness came the sound of many persons walking. They were coming nearer. Then through the shadows came the flicker of torches, and there could be seen dark, silent figures approaching. Now a face could be made out, now the glint of a sword. A man was leading them. Evidently they were searching for someone, a thief, it might be, or an escaped prisoner; possibly, this was itself a band of thieves—though thieves would scarcely carry torches, even in the garden.

The disciples drew their swords and waited, standing back in the shadows.

Nearer and nearer they came. Their leader appar-

ently knew just where to take them.—Ah, it was Judas! He now approached nearer to Jesus as if to greet him. He had given his followers this sign: whoever he embraced and kissed was the one they were to seize and carry off. As he drew near, Jesus spoke to him and said, "Judas, will you betray me with a kiss?" But Judas did not answer. Some of the men with him stepped forward, ready to seize Jesus.

The disciples saw what was about to happen and cried out, "Master, shall we strike with our swords?" Without waiting for an answer, Peter drove straight for the nearest man—it happened to be one of the high priest's slaves. But his stroke missed; instead of beheading the man, he merely struck off his ear. Then Jesus said to Peter, "Put up your sword. All those who take the sword perish by the sword."

What could they do? Jesus himself forbade them to fight. He was actually giving himself up to Judas and his band! There was nothing to do but flee for their lives. All—even Peter and John—now forsook him and fled.

JESUS A PRISONER

Jesus said to his captors, "Why have you come out, as against a robber, with swords and clubs? When I sat daily in the temple, teaching, you did not stretch forth your hands to take me! But this is your hour, and the power of darkness."

Jesus led before the high priest.—They led him to the high priest's house—it was in the southwest corner of the city, high on the western hill (see the map of Jerusalem).

Peter followed afar off. He had thrown away his sword, but came back to see what was done with Jesus. He had promised to go with Jesus to prison and death,

he was still bound to his Lord by the sacrament of the supper. At the critical moment he had lost his nerve and fled. He was now ashamed of his loss of courage. He could not leave his Master and go home, or go anywhere else—there was nowhere else for him to go. So he followed at a distance.

Up in the house, Judas and the slaves handed over Jesus to the priests and scribes assembled there. While they kept him bound, the slaves taunted and mocked him. They blindfolded him and struck him and said to him, "Prophesy, you prophet: tell who it was that struck you then!"

Peter's denial.—Down in the court Peter stood beside the brazier of coals which had been lighted, warming himself. One of the women servants, seeing him, said, "This fellow was also with them." Fearing he too might be seized, Peter denied it—"Woman, I don't even know him." A little while after this another made the same remark, and again he denied. An hour or so later, as they were standing there, one of the men said, "This fellow certainly was with him! His speech betrays him —he is a Galilean!"

Peter was thoroughly alarmed. There was no way out of the court except through the door, and that was well barred and guarded. So he denied even this: "Man, I don't know what you're talking about." Just then the cock crew. Peter remembered what Jesus had said, "Before cock-crowing, you will deny that you ever knew me." Looking up to the gallery where Jesus stood, with his hands bound behind him and the brutal slaves standing around him, Peter saw Jesus look down at him.

It was more than Peter could bear. He was a coward; he had fled in fear and left Jesus; he had even denied

that he knew him. And yet he knew that Jesus loved him; and, in his weak way, he loved Jesus, and was ashamed of his disloyalty. He made his way out, somehow or other got past the door, and went into the street. Here he broke down and cried bitterly.

JESUS CONDEMNED

The "trial" of Jesus before the priests was a farce. He was allowed no witnesses. There was no jury. The time was dead of night. The "trial" followed immediately after his arrest. He was condemned within a few minutes of the first hearing of the charge. And the court was not the regular Sanhedrin court, but only a self-appointed group of the enemies of the accused. All this was contrary to the Jewish law. And yet the very ones who did it were the scribes and priests, the teachers and upholders of the Law. In their anxiety to get rid of Jesus at once, they utterly disregarded all law and justice.

The examination.—After questioning Jesus for some time and receiving no answer, they tried to get witnesses who would say that he had threatened to destroy the temple; but the "witnesses" did not agree. They then tried once more to make him convict himself, but he said nothing.

Then they determined to use the testimony of Judas —"He claims to be the Messiah." And so they asked him, "Are you the Messiah?" To this he replied, "If I tell you, you will not believe; and if I ask you, you will not answer. But from henceforth the Son of Man shall be seated at the right hand of the Power of God."

The high priest's question.—This was what they wanted! With a solemn oath, the high priest adjured him, "Tell us, are you then the Messiah, the Son of the

Blessed One?" Jesus replied, "You have said it. That is who I am." They rose up in excitement, shouting, "We have no need of witnesses!—He has condemned himself!—You have heard the blasphemy.—Is he guilty? —Yes, and worthy of death!"

Now they could go to Pilate with a charge which would secure his crucifixion.

Jesus' innocence.—Did any of them pause to ask if Jesus' claim could possibly be true? Did they think for a moment that, after all, their idea of the Messiah might be false, and Jesus' idea the true one? Did it once occur to them that Jesus might be innocent? Or that their judgment might be mistaken? Or that their whole view of religion, and of the Law, and of God, might be false, and Jesus be in the right?

No.—In their folly they undertook to put to death the Prince of Life, as one of the apostles afterwards said, and while unjustly condemning Jesus they were also condemning themselves. Instead of saving themselves and their city, their wealth, and their privileges, they only brought on destruction the more swiftly. Forty years after Jesus' death Jerusalem was destroyed, the temple sacked, and its golden treasures carried off to Rome. The judgment came, and the Kingdom of God. They had their share in the one, but not in the other. And to this day the world remembers the condemnation of Jesus as its darkest hour of oppression.

STUDY TOPICS

1. Where was the Garden of Gethsemane?
2. Tell what Jesus did after leaving the upper room.
3. What was Jesus' prayer in the garden?
4. What might Jesus have done had he been afraid to die? Why did he refuse to escape?

5. Give the story of the arrest of Jesus by Judas and his band.
6. Where was Jesus led by his captors? Tell what took place there.
7. Tell what Peter did and said as he stood in the court-yard. Where were the other disciples at the time?

CHAPTER XXXI

THE CRUCIFIXION

EARLY the next morning the priests and scribes led Jesus to Pilate. For they themselves had no authority to put him to death. The Romans forbade even the Sanhedrin, the highest Jewish court, to carry out the sentence of death—and Jesus' "judges" in the high priest's house were by no means the Sanhedrin. All such cases had to be tried again before a Roman officer.

BEFORE PILATE

Pilate was very anxious to keep peace and order in Jerusalem during the feast. The Jews, he thought, were an unruly race. Riots were frequent during the festivals, when great crowds of pilgrims filled the capital. He kept his soldiers ready at a moment's notice to march down into the city and restore order.

The chief priests and scribes knew that if they represented Jesus as a dangerous agitator, one who claimed to be the Messiah, that is, the king of Jerusalem, then Pilate would be more willing to put him to death.—And if Pilate hesitated they could threaten to start a riot during the Passover. That would be enough to persuade him!

The charge against Jesus.—So they led Jesus to the Prætorium, which was in the old palace of Herod in the northwest corner of the Old City (see the map). The chief priests did not go in, since they were strictly observing the Passover, and to go into the Gentile

court-room would be defiling. So Pilate came out to them, and they stated the charge against Jesus: "We found this man (1) perverting the nation, forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar; and (2) saying that he himself has been anointed king."

This charge, in both clauses, was a direct falsehood. Jesus did not forbid the payment of tribute (see Chapter 28). Nor did he claim to be the king of the Jews: his idea of the Messiah was spiritual, just as his idea of the Kingdom of God was spiritual.

Pilate's examination.—Pilate turned to Jesus. "Are you king of the Jews?" He asked the question almost in derision—the prisoner before him looked anything but like a king, with no crown, no scepter, no purple robes of royalty: the clothes he wore were torn and dirty from the abuse of the high priest's slaves the night before.

Jesus had kept silence while the high priests, amid the general clamor, stated the accusation. Now, in response to Pilate's question, "Are you a king?" he only replied, "So you say."

The answer was non-committal. Pilate knew no more than before. Perhaps he thought the prisoner was overcome with fright, and afraid to speak in his own defense; so he led Jesus inside and questioned him privately. But Jesus, of course, was not afraid. He knew himself to be a "king"—but a king in no sense that Pilate could understand. So he had answered in this unusual manner.

Jesus had no trial.—To speak of the "trial" before Pilate is just as much a mistake as to call the night session in the high priest's house a trial. The action of the scribes and priests was only a plot, thinly disguised. The examination by Pilate was not a trial—for Jesus

had no witnesses, and the governor was in a hurry and anxious to dismiss the case. Anything but the trial of a popular leader on the very morning of the Passover! "These crazy priests!" he said to himself, "to be bringing a mob here at such a time as this!"

Yet he knew that Jesus was not guilty. So he brought him back to the porch outside the palace and said to the chief priests and the multitude, "I find no fault in this man." "You're no friend of Cæsar," the priests shouted back, "if you let this man go. He stirs up the people continually, teaching throughout the nation, beginning in Galilee, and now coming here."

Led before Herod.—When Pilate heard Galilee mentioned he thought at once of a plan. He really did not know what to do with Jesus, but wanted to get rid of him. If he was a Galilean he could say that he had no jurisdiction in the case and hand him over to Herod Antipas. Herod was even then in Jerusalem, having come up for the feast, and to Herod Jesus was sent. Pilate thought that this was the solution of his difficulty.

Herod had wanted for a long time to see Jesus, expecting to witness some miracle done by him. When Jesus was led before him the tetrarch asked him many questions. The scribes and elders grew vehement in their accusations, but Jesus answered them never a word. At last Herod and his soldiers began to mock Jesus, put a purple robe on him, and sent him back to Pilate.

Before Pilate once more.—When Pilate saw the rabble returning with the angry priests and their prisoner, he knew that he would have to act quickly to save the man and prevent a tumult. He went out and spoke to them. "You have brought me this man as

one who misguides the people," he said. "But, after examining him in your presence, I find no fault in him touching those things you have charged against him. Nor has Herod found him guilty, for he has sent him back to me. It is evident that nothing worthy of death has been done by the prisoner."

Then Pilate continued: "It is the custom to release a prisoner at the Passover, whoever you ask. Whom shall I release, this man or Barabbas?"—Barabbas was a Zealot who had started an insurrection in the city and had committed murder.—They cried out, "Release Barabbas!" "What then shall I do with this man, who is called 'King of the Jews'?" "Crucify him, crucify him!" they shouted.

Jesus condemned.—And so Pilate, afraid to be unpopular or to gain the enmity of the chief priests, and wishing to avoid a tumult at the Passover, gave in to them. He released Barabbas, and sentenced Jesus to death. And at the same time he ordered two thieves crucified with him.

THE DEATH ON THE CROSS

Crucifixion was one of the most terrible means of death ever inflicted upon criminals.

The custom of crucifixion.—It was not a Jewish penalty, but was practiced by the Romans. Yet so horrible was it that no Roman citizen was ever given this punishment. Only slaves were crucified in Italy. But in the provinces, as in Syria, where the people were ruled by Roman military governors, crucifixion was the punishment for brigands, murderers, and insurrectionists (that is, rebels against the Roman government). The two thieves were crucified as brigands; Jesus was crucified as an insurrectionist.

Golgotha.—The priests, with a small company of soldiers, led Jesus and the thieves outside the city to a place called Golgotha, "The Skull." We do not know where this was, but it was near Jerusalem. Here they stripped the three victims and nailed them to their crosses. As they did so they offered them wine mingled with myrrh in order to deaden their pain. But Jesus refused to drink it—he would die with his mind unclouded by any drug.

At the top of his cross was placed an inscription which said,

THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS

The crowd standing by began to mock him, saying, " 'The King of the Jews'?—Come down from the cross, then, and save yourself first of all!" Others said, "Aha! you temple-destroyer, on the cross is where you belong!" —"He saved others, but he cannot save himself!"— "Let this Messiah come down from the cross and we will believe him!" Even one of the thieves, hanging nearby, mocked and cursed him. Jesus heard what they said, but he only murmured—the gentlest words ever uttered —"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

Then the other thief rebuked the one who cursed Jesus. "Isn't there any fear of God left in you, even when you're in the same place as this man? We deserve what we're getting. But *he* doesn't." Then turning his head toward our Lord he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom!" And the Lord replied, "Yes; to-day you will be with me in Paradise."

Jesus dies.—After a while the priests went home, and the crowd began to disperse. The soldiers on guard

were throwing dice for the clothes of the three victims. Some of Jesus' disciples had come near, and with them came Mary, his mother, and two or three other women from Galilee.

As he hung there, repeating over to himself some of the Psalms, Jesus grew thirsty and asked for a drink. One of the soldiers, feeling pity for him, took a reed, put a sponge on one end, dipped this in vinegar and moistened Jesus' lips.

Towards noon the heat became intense. And then, as if the very skies would have mercy upon the one whom his people had unjustly cast out, the sun was clouded over and darkness came on. This lasted until after Jesus died, three hours later.

The crucified usually lingered for two or three days before they died from the heat and hunger and exhaustion. But it was evident that Jesus' strength was fast failing. He was worn with fatigue from his months of travel and teaching, and the awful strain of the past twenty-four hours was telling upon him. At last, about three in the afternoon, he rallied for a moment, gave a loud cry, and said, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit."—He was dead.

The centurion in command of the guard, when he saw how Jesus died, remarked, "Certainly, this was a righteous man." He had seen crucifixions before, but never had he seen anyone give up his life so nobly, like a true hero, a Son of God.

THE TOMB IN THE GARDEN

There was a man in Jerusalem who came from the village of Arimathea. His name was Joseph; he was a member of the Sanhedrin and very wealthy. He had been looking for the coming of the Kingdom of God; he

was a good man, and secretly an admirer of Jesus. Of course, he had nothing to do with the plot against Jesus which the high priests had formed and carried out.

Permission from Pilate.—He now went boldly to Pilate and asked permission to bury the body of Jesus. He had a new tomb in his garden, hewn out of stone, like a shelf in the rock. Here he could place Jesus' body until after the Sabbath, when the burial should take place.

Pilate was surprised at his request, but readily granted it. Then Joseph took down the body from the cross, wrapped it in a linen cloth, and placed it in the tomb.

A stone was rolled against the opening, and Joseph went home about the time when the Sabbath lamps were being lighted.

The faithful women from Galilee had followed Joseph and had seen where he placed the body of Jesus. All day they had stood near the cross—as near as they dared to come—and now they prepared to do a last kind service to their Master: they got ready the spices and ointments for his burial.

STUDY TOPICS

1. Did Jesus have a fair trial, either before the priests or before Pilate? Give reasons for your answer.
2. What was Pilate most anxious to do when Jesus was brought before him?
3. Where was the Prætorium? What was it?
4. Tell what took place when Jesus was led before Pilate. Why did he send him to Herod?
5. Who was Barabbas? Why do you suppose the priests preferred his release to that of Jesus?
6. Tell the story of the crucifixion.
7. Was Jesus buried on the day of his death? Where was his body placed?

CHAPTER XXXII

THE RESURRECTION

JESUS' body was taken down from the cross late in the afternoon of Friday. The next day, Saturday, was the Sabbath. The disciples, like all other Jews, rested on this day. Where they were we cannot tell. No doubt they were in hiding, for fear of the high priests and scribes who had just put their master to death.

It was the saddest Sabbath they had ever known. Jesus was dead, their beloved teacher; their hope of the Kingdom of God had been dashed to ruin; and their own lives were in danger. To-morrow they would start for home. Their loss and disappointment were overwhelming.

THE EMPTY TOMB

Early the next morning, at dawn, the women went to the garden to prepare Jesus' body for burial. They brought with them spices and ointments and linen cloth. For that was the custom—the body was anointed and covered with sweet spices, and then wrapped tightly in linen. Where they intended to bury Jesus we do not know; probably it was right in the tomb in Joseph's garden, where the body now lay.

"He is not here; he is risen!"—As they went along they wondered if they would be able to pry the stone away from the tomb, for it was very heavy. But when they got there, behold, it was already rolled away! They entered the little cavern, with its shelves cut in the rock. But the body of Jesus was not there! They

were greatly perplexed and alarmed, and did not know what to make of it. Could someone have taken away the body—some friend, removing it elsewhere for burial? Or might some enemy have stolen it in the night?

As they stood there, wondering at what had taken place, they saw a vision. Two men stood beside them in dazzling apparel. The women were frightened and bowed their faces to the earth. The men said to them, "Why do you look here for one who is living? He is not here; he is risen. Remember the words that he said to you, even in Galilee, 'The Son of Man must be crucified, and rise again.' Go now and tell Peter and the other disciples that he goes before you into Galilee. There you shall see him, even as he said."

Peter at the tomb.—The women went out with fear and trembling, and returned to the city. When they arrived they told the disciples what they had seen and heard—the empty tomb, the vision, the words of the two men. And it seemed like a dream to the disciples. But Peter and one of the others rose up and ran to the tomb. Looking in, they saw the linen cloths lying there, which the women had not noticed; but they saw no vision, nor heard any words. So instead of returning to Jerusalem, they set out at once for Galilee.

Back to Galilee.—The disciples were discouraged and sick at heart. "The Kingdom of God" now seemed an idle fancy—and the "rising from the dead" impossible. They had expected an earthly kingdom: Jesus' crucifixion was the most terrible blow that kind of an expectation could possibly receive. No wonder they were now so discouraged! It seemed weeks ago, instead of a few short days, when Jesus had come up with them to Jerusalem, intending to keep the Passover. There

was nothing to do now but go home, get out their nets, and start fishing once more. Their dream had vanished. It had all been a vast mistake, and it had ended in dismal failure. Jesus of Nazareth was dead, and his cause was lost.

ON THE WAY TO EMMAUS

And so, as Peter and the others set out for Galilee, two of Jesus' followers who lived at Emmaus, just west of Jerusalem, set forth for home. It was the afternoon of that same day, Sunday.

> "And as they walked along, they were talking about all that had happened. And it came to pass as they talked with each other and questioned, Jesus himself drew near and walked with them. But their eyes were holden, so that they did not recognize him.
>
> "He said to them, 'What are you talking about so earnestly as you walk along?'
>
> "They stopped and stood still, looking at him with sadness in their gaze. One of them, Cleopas, answered and said to him, 'Are you only a stranger in Jerusalem, and do you not know what has taken place there in the last few days?'
>
> "He asked, 'What things?'
>
> "They replied, 'About Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in word and deed before God and all the people; how the chief priests and rulers delivered him up to death and crucified him. But we hoped that he was the one who should redeem Israel. Yes; and besides all this, it is now the third day since he was crucified. Early this morning, certain women who belonged to our company went to the tomb, and found that his body was not there. Instead, they returned, saying they had seen a vision of angels, who told them that he was still

alive. Some of us then went to the tomb, and found it empty, just as the women had said; but Jesus himself has not been seen.'

"Then he said to them, 'O foolish men, and slow to believe, after all that the prophets have said! Was it not right for the Messiah to suffer these things and so to enter his glory?' Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he explained to them throughout the scriptures the references to himself as the Messiah.

"They now drew near to the village where Cleopas and his friend lived; but Jesus seemed to be going further. And so they urged him, saying, 'Come in and stay with us; it is nearly evening, and the day is almost gone.' So he went in as if to spend the night with them.

"And it came to pass, when he had sat down with them at the table, he took the loaf of bread and blessed it. Then breaking it, he gave it to them. And lo, their eyes were opened and they knew him: and immediately he vanished out of their sight. And they said to each other, 'Did not our hearts burn within us as he talked to us on the way, and explained to us the scriptures?'

"So they rose up at that very hour and returned to Jerusalem. They found the eleven gathered together, and the others with them, saying, 'The Master has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon.' Then they told what had happened on their way home, and how Jesus was made known to them in the breaking of the bread."—Luke 24:14-35.

WHAT BECAME OF THE DISCIPLES?

Just as Cleopas and his friend returned to Jerusalem "at that very hour" and told all that had happened, so the other disciples returned, after seeing Jesus risen

from the dead. Some saw him in Galilee and came back. Others, like Mary of Magdala, saw him the very day the tomb was found empty. Only one thing drew them together again, and that was their faith that Jesus was still living, still their Master and the Messiah.

Tarrying in Jerusalem.—Here they remained, in the upper room of the house in Jerusalem where they had eaten the Passover with Jesus. From time to time Jesus came into their midst and talked with them. At last one day he led them out to Bethany, lifted up his hands and blessed them, and vanished from their sight. A cloud received him—He had ascended into heaven; he had returned to his Father.

Preaching the Gospel.—A few days later, on the Day of Pentecost, the disciples began to preach. They were not in Galilee, but right in Jerusalem, where Jesus had been put to death, and where their own lives were still in danger. It was a wonderful change in the disciples, and only one thing could have made them so brave and fearless. It was their faith in Jesus, once their Master and Teacher, now their Messiah and Lord. For they had actually seen him and been with him since his resurrection from the dead. They believed that he was now in heaven, seated at the right hand of God. Stephen, the first martyr of the Church, saw him there in a vision as he was dying. And they expected that Jesus would soon return to set up the Kingdom of God in Jerusalem. For still, in spite of all that Jesus had said, they looked for an earthly kingdom, with a palace and a throne in Jerusalem, and armies and tribute and courts of law. It was a long while before this idea disappeared and the Christian Church began to realize the spiritual truth of Jesus' teaching.

The growth of the Church.—The story of the bold preaching of the disciples, of their persecution by the Pharisees and priests, of the gradual rise and growth of the Church—all this is written in the Acts of the Apostles, and in the few other books which have come down to us from those long-ago days. Peter and James and John were the leaders of the Church in Jerusalem. The others, tradition tells us, went elsewhere to preach the gospel. Judas, the traitor, had killed himself when he realized what he had done, and Matthias was chosen to fill his place and be one of the Twelve.

This long story of the spread of Christianity; the rise and growth of the Church; its wonderful history through nearly nineteen centuries down to our own days —this you must read some time. For, next to the Life of Jesus, it is the most wonderful story in the world.

JESUS OUR MASTER TO-DAY

And all through the history of the Christian Church the memory of Jesus, the records of his life and teaching in the gospels, and the sacraments by which his disciples live in communion with him, have been preserved and treasured. He is still our Master and Teacher, just as he was the Teacher of his little band of disciples in Galilee. And still he says to us, as he said to them, "Why do you call me Master, unless you do what I say?" Still he says to us, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, blessed are the pure in heart, blessed are the peacemakers—for they are the true children of God and theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven."

The Savior of the World.—And not only is he our Master and Teacher, he is also our Savior and Redeemer. By his life and teachings he reveals to us our Father in heaven, helps us to know Him and love Him,

as His loyal and faithful children. Of Jesus it was truly said, "In him was life; and the life was the light of men" (John 1: 4). For his life was the life of God Himself, lived among men, God in man, "incarnate."

And also, by his perfect obedience, even through suffering and death, he saved us, and all who believe in him, from sin and eternal death. He laid down his life, as he said, "a ransom for many"; his blood was shed "for the remission of sins."

And by his resurrection, he "conquered death for every man." In him,—that is, by receiving him, by living in communion with him, by accepting his help or "grace," by loving and obeying him,—we are able to conquer sin, overcome our faults, grow more like him, and fit for God's Kingdom and eternal life.

The secret of true happiness.—One day, thirty years after the death of Jesus, a man lay chained in a dingy prison in the far-away city of Rome. He was there, not because he had committed any crime, but because, like his Master, he had offended the Jewish high priests. His name was Paul.

He is writing a letter to some Christians in distant Philippi, in Macedonia, to thank them for a little gift of money which they had sent him. He expects to be put to death, sooner or later, perhaps in a very few days.

Do you know what he writes to his friends in this letter? It is one of the most joyful letters anyone ever wrote. "Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I say it, Rejoice!" Then he tells them what is the greatest thing in the world to him, and the secret of his happiness in spite of suffering and danger. It is this: "To know Christ, and the power of his resurrection."

This was the secret of Paul's happiness in spite of suffering, in spite of imprisonment, in spite of approach-

ing death. "To know Jesus"—this was the most wonderful thing in the world.

To know Jesus is still the secret of true happiness. It is still the most wonderful thing in the world.

STUDY TOPICS

1. Make an outline of the events of Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, as told in the last three chapters.
2. What did the women from Galilee arrange to do on Sunday morning?
3. Describe the tomb in the garden. To whom did it belong?
4. Give the story of the visit of the women to the tomb.
5. Where did some of the disciples go after Jesus' crucifixion?
6. Give the story of the Walk to Emmaus.
7. What became of the disciples after Jesus' resurrection? Where in the Bible would you look to find something about this?
8. Jesus is our Master to-day, just as he was in the days of his earthly life. Show how this is true, how we can follow him, learn from his teaching, love and obey and honor him as did his disciples long ago in Palestine.
9. Explain what Saint Paul and the other early Christians found to be the secret of true happiness.
10. Turn to page 8 and memorize the poem, *How He Came*, by W. J. Dawson.

Dear Lord Jesus, our Teacher and Savior, we thank thee for thy coming to save the world; for thy holy life of courage and self-sacrifice, for thy divine teaching, and for thy death upon the cross.

Help us day by day to follow thy teaching, to do thy will as faithful disciples; to be thoughtful and humble and courageous, gentle and generous in thought and word and deed; to help others, and hasten the coming of God's Kingdom. Amen.